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Rousseau, Ferguson, and Societal Development Theory: A Historical Analysis in the Sociology of Knowledge

by

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"So convenient a thing it is to be a *reasonable creature*, since it enables one to find or make a reason for everything that one has a mind to do."

-Benjamin Franklin

"the more we acquire new knowledge, the more we deprive ourselves of the means of acquiring the most important knowledge of all; and, in a sense, it is through studying man that we have rendered ourselves incapable of knowing him."

-Jean-Jacques Rousseau

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled *Rousseau, Ferguson, and Societal Development Theory: A Historical Analysis in the Sociology of Knowledge*, submitted by Scott McLean in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS in Sociology.

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Date..December 13, 1983.....

ABSTRACT

My thesis in this essay is that theories of societal development must be understood and explained in terms of authorial social experiences and practical orientations. Theories present both analytical and normative propositions, and do not merely reflect the cumulative logic of science, nor mechanically express historical changes in social organization. I advance this thesis through a detailed case study of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1755), and Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767).

The essay's structure reflects its thesis. Part I illustrates the empirical, theoretical, and normative literature on societal development used by Rousseau and Ferguson, emphasizing theological, contractarian, and natural history traditions. Part II interprets Rousseau's and Ferguson's theoretical and normative propositions about societal development, and asserts that these propositions cannot be explained with reference only to the intellectual antecedents surveyed in Part I. Part III investigates Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences and practical orientations prior to writing these books, and suggests that these experiences and orientations stimulated Rousseau and Ferguson to creatively synthesize existing literature and contemporary macro-historical changes into unique theories of societal development. This case study has important implications for the sociology of social theory, and for the field of development studies.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Societal development theories present analytical and normative propositions about historical patterns of social change. In this essay, I suggest that notions about societal development reflect their authors' social experiences and practical orientations, rather than merely express the internal logic of the history of ideas, or macro-historical changes in social organization. I advance this thesis about understanding and explaining historical theories of development, through a case study of two important examples: Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Discourse on the Origin of Inequality (1755), and Adam Ferguson's Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767). [1] The two books use historical documents and travel reports about savage cultures to describe, explain, and evaluate the historical development of human societies.

The structure of this essay reflects its thesis. Part I illustrates the empirical, theoretical, and normative literature on societal development read by Rousseau and Ferguson, emphasizing the traditions of theology, social contract theory, and natural history. I present the background information which would be sufficient to explain and interpret the Discourse and Essay, if my thesis were invalid. Part I is not a comprehensive history of social theory prior to the Enlightenment, nor does it provide detailed examinations of particular theorists. Rather, I examine the sources of these two books, illustrating their implications for notions of social order and change. To clarify and contextualize this discussion, I occasionally go beyond Rousseau's and Ferguson's direct sources. Part I gives a relatively superficial account of important historical theorists and ideas, but this superficiality is unavoidable given the vast intellectual antecedents to Rousseau's and Ferguson's works.

Part II interprets the Discourse and Essay. The books present complex theories and normative evaluations of societal development. They describe the steps by which simple societies become complex civilizations, and they explain the driving forces behind these changes. Initially, societies develop as a historical unfolding of human nature, but the change or stability of advanced societies depends upon legal agreements and moral commitments.

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[1] These books are subsequently referred to simply as the Discourse and the Essay. Citations from them use the letter D or E, followed by a page reference.

Thus, Rousseau's and Ferguson's theories of societal development juxtapose evolutionary visions of history with ahistorical assumptions about the nature of civil society. Normatively, the outstanding feature of both works is their ambivalent evaluation of the course of history. Neither assumes that civil society is automatically better than savagery, but both assert that advanced societies have the potential to improve the human condition. To conclude Part II, I suggest that Rousseau's and Ferguson's theoretical complexity and normative ambivalence cannot be explained with reference only to the intellectual antecedents presented in Part I.

Part III provides the socio-historical context of the Discourse and Essay, which according to my hypothesis is needed to explain and understand these works. Within the limitations of existing sources, I discuss the social experiences and practical orientations of Rousseau and Ferguson prior to their writing of these books. I link these experiences and orientations with the literature discussed in Part I, and use these various sources of information to explain Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings on social order and change. Basically, I suggest that Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences shaped their normative evaluations of modern society. These social experiences also structured the way in which Rousseau and Ferguson understood their own and other cultures, and gave them practical commitments which limited the parameters of their theories. I conclude by illustrating the implications of my case study for the sociology of social theory, and for the domain of development studies.

Before proceeding to the main task of this essay, I will clarify some theoretical and methodological issues. The history of ideas and the sociology of knowledge are the dominant approaches to understanding and explaining historical texts. Arthur Lovejoy asserts that the history of ideas is similar to analytic chemistry (Lovejoy, 1950: 3). Historians of ideas identify the basic 'unit-ideas' which underly larger ideological systems, and use such units to compare seemingly diverse historical doctrines (Abercrombie: 5). Lovejoy suggests that historians trace important ideas over large historical and cultural distances, and discover how new ideas are introduced and diffused (Lovejoy, 1950: 15-20). Essentially, ideas emerge and

evolve due to the intellectual process of curiosity, discovery, and debate (Abercrombie: 6).

The conventional study of the history of ideas is flawed. Tracing ideas over time leads to poor interpretations of specific works. This procedure is frequently anachronistic, assumes unrealistic levels of coherence and thematic unity over time, and often reconstructs arguments which would contradict their author's own interpretation (Skinner: 5-9). Divorcing ideas from their historical agents tends to reify ideas, and preclude the consideration of authorial intentions (Skinner: 10-11, 22). Finally, remaining at the level of ideas ignores the possible systematic relationships between knowledge and social or existential context. This final criticism is the point of departure for the sociology of knowledge.

Minimally, the sociology of knowledge asserts that ideas are related to a social base. Theories of the social determination of knowledge predate the institutionalization of sociology, but Karl Mannheim is the first writer to offer a systematic account of the subject (Abercrombie: 8-9). For Mannheim, interpreting and explaining the origins of ideas are interrelated. He writes that "there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured" (Mannheim: 2). Mannheim's attempt to illuminate these social origins is not unitary throughout his various writings, but his sociology of knowledge rests on a consistent critique of individualist and purely intellectual accounts of thought. People do not confront the world as abstract, solitary beings, so it is false to assert that knowledge derives from the sense experience of individuals seeking truth (Mannheim: 4, 29). Mannheim clearly rejects the abstract individual as the basis of thought:

> Strictly speaking, it is incorrect to say that the single individual thinks. Rather it is more correct to insist that he participates in thinking further what other men have thought before him. He finds himself in an inherited situation with patterns of thought which are appropriate to this situation and attempts to elaborate further the inherited modes of response or to substitute others for them in order to deal more adequately with the new challenges which have arisen out of the shifts and changes in his situation. Every individual is therefore in a two-fold sense predetermined by the fact of growing up in a society: on the one hand he finds a ready-made situation and on the other he finds in that situation preformed patterns of thought and of conduct (Mannheim: 3).

Mannheim asserts that thought is linked to society through language, established patterns of thinking, range of perceivable objects, and common experiences (Mannheim: 3, 31).

Since it is inextricably social, knowledge cannot be explained at a purely intellectual level (Mannheim: 267). Rather, "a new type of intellectual history" is needed, which relates ideas to social-historical factors (Mannheim: 49-50). Mannheim's critique of asocial and purely intellectual notions of knowledge leads to the following discussion of social processes influencing knowledge: [2]

> (a) every formulation of a problem is made possible only by a previous actual human experience which involves such a problem; (b) in selection from the multiplicity of data there is involved an act of will on the part of the knower; and (c) forces arising out of living experience are significant in the direction which the treatment of the problem follows (Mannheim: 268).

This succinct passage summarizes three postulates of the sociology of knowledge that I will follow in this essay. Social-historical context limits the range of conceivable thought, and -- within this range one's creativity is further shaped by one's personal experience of that social-historical context.

This version of the sociology of knowledge leaves two unresolved dilemmas. First, to what extent is human intellectual creativity constrained by social determinants? Most sociological theories of knowledge make some form of compromise between complete determinancy and perfectly free creativity (Abercrombie: 168-170). Degree of social determination varies alternatively by domain of thought (ie. moral beliefs vs. mathematics), type of thought (ie. modal vs. atypical vs. deranged), or component of mind involved in thinking (Abercrombie: 169; Stark: 148-150). I suggest that attempts to find a general law of social determinancy are misguided. Rather, since personal creativity and strength of social constraint vary according to context, one should analyze specific examples of the relationship between thought and social life. Human agency and social constraint are not tied in some universal relationship, and only in concrete case studies of real people and their ideas in specific social-historical circumstances can one begin to understand the contingency and

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[2] Mannheim and most other sociologists of knowledge unfortunately tend not to follow this theoretical statement in their substantive work. Rather, micro-level processes, as referred to in points b and c, are neglected, and groups' systems of beliefs are analyzed according to class relations and material interests (Abercrombie: 53-55).

complexity of this relationship.

The second unresolved dilemma of this version of the sociology of knowledge is that there is no explanation of the mechanism whereby social factors influence thought. Mannheim clearly establishes the correlation between types of thought and social life, but he does not explain this correlation very well (Abercrombie: 51). Werner Stark identifies three kinds of explanations of this relationship. First, theories of causal determination suggest that ideas are epiphenomena, produced mechanically by the social substructure (Stark: 246). Structuralist marxists such as Althusser would fit into this category of theory, since they depict humans as puppets of a social structure dominated by the mode of production (Abercrombie: 108-110).

The most common explanation of the relationship between thought and social life is functionalist. Functionalist theories use an organic analogy, and suggest that ideas emerge which contribute to the overall stability of social life (Stark: 248-249). Such explanations are not deterministic, since functional interdependence rather than one-way causation characterizes the relationship of ideas and society (Stark: 251-255). Parson's notion of a common value system, and marxist notions of a dominant ideology both suggest that ideas function to increase social integration. Stark's third type of mechanism linking ideas and society is the theory of elective affinity (Stark: 256). This theory, associated with Max Weber, is a Darwinian selection model of knowledge. Ideas spring up like mutations, but their survival depends upon their correspondence with the experiences and interests of significant social groups (Parkin: 58). Diffusion, but not genesis of ideas can be sociologically explained by the notion of elective affinity.

My conception of the explanatory mechanism which links ideas and society is that the process of social life is itself the mechanism, because both thought and society exist only through this social process. Abstract conceptions of society or thought are reifications if they are separated from historical individuals. Ideas and society emerge through people's interaction with one another and with their historical and physical context (Frisby: 93, 95-98). Since ideas and social reality are both inextricably part of social interaction, their

linkage is a condition of their existence. Therefore, the sociology of knowledge must take historical human agents as its subject matter. The explanatory mechanism linking social life and thought is the variety of social psychological processes by which individuals convert their own experiences into intellectual representations. There is no universal mechanism whereby this occurs, so one must study specific cases of how creative representations of reality are influenced by real world experience.

In practical terms, my response to the two unresolved dilemmas of Mannheim's sociology of knowledge reorients the discipline toward a biographical and social psychological focus. A micro focus allows a more detailed analysis of the complex relationships between thought, social life, and authorial experiences. Methodologically, this reorientation promotes the investigation of specific knowledge, produced by identifiable individuals whose social experiences prior to the production of that knowledge can be documented. [3] This methodological focus explains both why I have concentrated on the Discourse and Essay rather than on the entire corpus of Rousseau's and Ferguson's works, and my lack of reference to abstract macro-level characteristics of eighteenth century Europe. To interpret and explain the Discourse and Essay, I read the books and researched their intellectual heritages and biographical contexts. With respect to the sources, I concentrated on the original manuscripts, or translations, and made no systematic attempt to review secondary literature. With respect to biographical information, I was restricted by practical considerations to existing biographical works.

Beyond theory and methodology, a final issue of clarification concerns the problem of anachronism. Modern social scientists have a historical conception of the world. Terms such as evolution, development, and historical stages are part of our everyday vocabulary. However, a fully historical vision of social reality did not exist until the eighteenth century. It is important not to impute our common sense assumptions about the nature of history into

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[3]Compare this methodological approach with Abercrombie's description of the conventional Mannheimian sociology of knowledge methodology: describe a system of belief; identify the social group espousing that belief; and show what relationship exists between the belief and the group (Abercrombie: 35).

the writings of earlier theorists. Anachronistic interpretation must be avoided in Part I, as well as in the reading of Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings, which juxtapose seemingly modern notions of development in primitive societies, with ahistorical visions of advanced society. Problems of vocabulary arise in this context. One must allow a certain flexibility for key terms such as development. Although all of the writers to be discussed do address issues related to societal development, they do not do so in terms which we would immediately recognize. A balance must be maintained between projecting modern theories of development into these writers, and rejecting their ideas as irrelevant to our conceptions of societal development.

II. PART I: INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

A. INTRODUCTION

To understand the ideas about societal development in Rousseau's Discourse and Ferguson's Essay, one must be familiar with empirical, theoretical, and normative elements in this branch of intellectual history. First, one must know what type of social order and change Rousseau and Ferguson were talking about, and what empirical data reinforced their arguments. Both writers accepted Locke's notion that "in the beginning, all the world was America" (Locke: 319). They used travellers' reports and other ethnographic materials on the American Indians to describe the development of society from primitive beginnings to the advanced stages represented by contemporary Europe. Second, one must know what existing theoretical approaches were used to explain societal development. In this era, the three most important paradigms were Christian theology, social contract theory, and an emerging post-contractual theory of natural history. Finally, one must understand the normative implications conventionally associated with social change. Progress and degeneration were the major eighteenth century normative evaluations, although notions that society's moral worth was cyclical or unchanging also existed.

These three elements are inextricably confounded. In Rousseau's and Ferguson's sources, there are no pure data, nor any purely abstract theories of societal development. Social theorists frequently use literature about contemporary or historical savage groups to support their logical deductions about society, and this ethnographic literature is itself structured by theoretical and normative assumptions. Rather than artificially separate data, theory, and normative orientations in the sources of the Discourse and Essay, I will describe pre-existing traditions which combine these three elements. To clarify this discussion, I will first introduce historical European images of the savage, and theories and philosophies of history.

IMAGES OF THE SAVAGE

Rousseau and Ferguson ground their theories of societal development on empirical data from American cultures. Ferguson stresses the need for an empirical approach to the study of mankind, and Rousseau frequently supports his abstract reflections with concrete observations (E: 2; D: 135). They consider existing savages to be a privileged source of data about the initial conditions of mankind, and the subsequent development of society. Ferguson writes that "if, in advanced years, we would form a just notion of our progress from the cradle, we must have recourse to the nursery" (E: 81). Rousseau asserts that existing Caribbean natives provide an empirical approximation of the state of nature (D: 103).

Since Rousseau never visited America, and Ferguson went only in 1778, they relied on travellers' reports for ethnographic details (Rendall: 31). The Discourse and Essay refer often to travel literature, but Rousseau and Ferguson are critical of such secondary sources. Rousseau writes that although many foreign voyages have been undertaken and written about, little has been learned about non-Europeans (D: 159). He states that "the entire world is covered with peoples of whom we know only the names, and yet we amuse ourselves judging the human race" (D: 160). Rousseau laments the fact that only "sailors, merchants, soldiers, and missionaries" make exotic voyages, and calls for philosophers to travel and analyze other nations accurately (D: 159-161). Ferguson criticizes travel literature in a spoof about a hypothetical traveller's report on the barbarism of ancient Greece (E: 195-197).

European travel narratives predated Rousseau and Ferguson by several centuries. Gilbert Chinard asserts that before Columbus, Europeans' attitudes about foreign cultures were mixed with fear and astonishment (Chinard, 1911: xv). Myths and legends about chaotic places and horrible monsters permeated early European accounts of other cultures (Sachs: 13-18). America was discovered when Europeans believed that the outside world contained fountains of youth, Amazons, Oriental wonders, and even an Earthly Paradise (Pagden: 10; Bissell: 1). Inevitably, the initial reports of the New World integrated the discovered people and places into existing belief systems.

Christopher Columbus' letters and journals illustrate this early dicovery literature. He professes a belief in Amazons and people with tails, and even asserts that on his third voyage he has found the Earthly Paradise of biblical and ancient lore (Columbus, 1931b: 296-300, Chinard,1911: 3). Columbus also provides details about more conventionally human inhabitants of the New World. He says the natives are a handsome people who keep their hair short, go about naked, and sometimes paint their bodies diverse colours (Columbus, 1931a: 97-98). They are loving, intelligent, eloquent, and recognize the existence of God, but have no religion, nor crime or weapons (Columbus, 1931a: 137, 207-208). With respect to social organization, savages live communally and respect the authority of their kings, but display no inequality nor private property (Columbus, 1931a: 137, 207-208; Columbus in Fairchild: 10).

Travel narratives by Europeans who had visited America combined with accounts of Indians' visits to Europe to create a large and very diverse literature on American cultures by 1650. This literature was characterized as much by disapproval of savages' cruelty and impiety as by admiration of their natural virtues (Bissell: 7; Hodgen: 360-362). However, early images of the savage had little direct impact on the work of Rousseau and Ferguson, since these authors used primarily the latest literature available to them. By the eighteenth century, commercial and imperial concerns increased French and Scottish interest in America, and augmented the number and quality of documents and oral reports about America by missionaries, colonial administrators, doctors, traders and soldiers (Emerson: 211, 215-219).

To illustrate the literature that served as Rousseau's and Ferguson's empirical description of societies at the earliest stages of development, I will introduce four of the works which they cited. The four books are Jean Baptiste Du Tertre's Histoire générale des isles des Christophe, de la Guadeloupe, de la Martinique, et autres dans l'Amérique (1654), Joseph Francois Lafitau's Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times (1724), Cadwallader Colden's History of the Five Indian Nations of Canada (1727), and Pierre de Charlevoix's Journal of a Voyage to North America (1744). [4] I will

[4]Du Tertre's book gives an overall description of the Antillies, including plants, animals, physical features, colonial history, and native inhabitants. Lafitau's work

present their common themes, and reproduce several key passages which reflect Rousseau's and Ferguson's empirical data about mankind's initial conditions.

These four works all discuss savages' physical and moral character, as well as their political and social institutions. Their descriptions and evaluations of the savages vary widely. Du Tertre makes the following idyllic description of the natives of the Antillies:

> les Sauvages de ces isles sont les plus contents, les plus heureux, les moins vicieux, les plus sociables, les moins contrefaits, et les moins tormentez des maladies, de toutes les nations du monde. Car ils sont tels que la nature les a produit, c'est à dire, dans une grande simlicité et naifueté naturelle: ils sont tous égaux, sans aucune sorte de superiorité (Du Tertre: 397).

Charlevoix agrees that Americans have many virtues, but he asserts that their character also has many drawbacks. Savages are vain, jealous, suspicious, easily offended, treacherous, vindictive, and vengeful (Charlevoix, vol. II: 87-88). As the following passage from Lafitau exemplifies, good and bad evaluations of the Indians are often juxtaposed:

> They have good minds, quick perceptions, admirable memories. They all have at least traces of an ancient and hereditary religion and a form of government. They think justly about their affairs, better than the mass of the people do among us. They reach their goals by sure paths. They act with cold common sense and a self-control which would wear out our patience. As a matter of honour and through greatness of soul, they never lose their tempers, seem always masters of themselves and are never angry. They have lofty and proud hearts, courage when put to the test, intrepid valour, heroic constancy under torture, and an evenness of disposition which hindrances and ill success do not alter. Among themselves, they have a sort of code of manners of their own of which they carefully observe all the niceties, a respect for the aged, a somewhat surprising deference for their equals which is difficult to reconcile with the independence and love of liberty of which they are very jealous. They are not affectionate or demonstrative. But notwithstanding, they are very kindly, affable and exercise toward strangers and the unfortunate a charitable hospitality which would confound all the nations of Europe.
>
> These good qualities are undoubtedly combined with a number of faults, for they are light-minded and changeable, inexpressive, lazy, excessively ungrateful, suspicious, treacherous, vindictive, and so much the more dangerous in that they know how to and do conceal their resentment longer. They are cruel to their enemies, brutal in their pleasures, vicious through ignorance and malice... (Lafitau: 90).

Savages would seem to have a multitude of good and bad characteristics.

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[4](cont'd) uses ethnographic data on Iroquois and other American peoples to prove the universality of religion and human nature. Colden provides a political history of the Five Nations coalition, and Charlevoix's book is a series of letters from his voyage throughout eastern North America.

Savages' religion and government are central concerns of these four ethnographic sources. Du Tertre suggests that the natives of the Antillies are not Christians, but have many pagan gods and myths (Du Tertre: 403-412). Charlevoix and Lafitau both suggest that savage paganism and idolatry are corrupted vestiges of a forgotten Christian heritage (Lafitau: 3, 92; Charlevoix, vol II: 141-149). Politically, the consensus is that savages usually have some form of aristocrasy (Colden: xv-xvii; Lafitau: 283; Charlevoix, vol II: 21), under which there is considerable freedom, and leadership is based on merit as well as birth (Colden: xvii; Du Tertre: 397; Charlevoix, vol II: 30). Finally, few laws exist, since honour and the pressures of social stigma control people (Colden: xxxiii; Charlevoix, vol II: 29-30).

These ethnographic reports describe a wide variety of savage customs and manners. They depict marriages, funerals, games, international negotiations, and various other customs, usually emphasizing their exotic nature. The most bizarre and ubiquitous of savage practices described are warfare and the torture of prisoners. All four authors write about this part of American life. The following passage from Charlevoix illustrates their exoticism:

> Nothing is more common than to see persons of every age and sex suffer for several hours, and even sometimes for several days together, all the torments which fire, or the most insatiable fury can inflict or invent, in order to render them more exquisite, without so much as a groan; they are even most commonly employed during their executions by the most gauling reproaches (Charlevoix, vol 2: 84).

The infatuation of European writers in this era with savage warfare and torture contains both an abhorrence of cruelty and a respect for fortitude. This ambivalence reflects the overall pattern of images of the savage in the eighteenth century.

THEORY AND NORMATIVE EVALUATIONS

Sources of ethnographic data are directly linked to theories of social organization and change. Clearly, travellers' perceptions of America were influenced by subjective factors such as education, social background, and ideological commitments (Pagden: 5). Beyond perception, reporting about savages was frequently an explicitly ideological enterprise, aimed at attacking or defending colonialism, Christianity, or European society in general (Meek:

37). The relationship of social theory to ethnography can work both ways. Anthony Pagden hypothesizes that changes in European social philosophy caused changes in the descriptions of savages from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (Pagden: 2-3). Alternatively, Ronald Meek asserts that literature on the American Indians stimulated new theories of societal development, and John Myres suggests that changing ethnographic data influenced notions of the state of nature, thus altering the course of political philosophy (Meek: 2-3; Myres: 10-11). Whatever the nature of the relationship, by the 1750's three basic paradigms of social order and change had attained fairly wide currency. These approaches are theology, social contract theory, and post-contractual theories of natural history.

Christian theological explanations of the origins and development of society stem from the book of Genesis. From Augustine and Aquinas to Bossuet and Lafitau, the basic explanation is that God created and structured the universe. Social contract theory contains three basic elements: a state of nature; a state of formal, political society; and a monumental contract which explains the transition between the two states. Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Locke all theorize within this paradigm. Natural history has a similar schematic organization: a state of man's initial conditions; a state of civil society; and a process of natural evolution, or accumulation of human culture, that explains the transition between the two states. Montesquieu, Turgot, and Adam Smith are important early writers in this tradition, within which Rousseau and Ferguson write. These three approaches to societal development are not mutually exclusive. For example, though I call Rousseau and Ferguson natural historians, their writings contain elements of contractarianism, as well as concessions to divine will.

Theories of societal development all contain normative evaluations of the course of history. One such evaluation is the belief that the earliest condition of man and society is the best condition. Arthur Lovejoy asserts that this primitivist belief was the dominant conception of social change throughout most of Western history (Lovejoy, in Whitney: xi). Margaret Hodgen supports this assertion, and suggests that primitivism was so universal in the sixteenth century that the terms 'change' and 'degeneration' were synonymous (Hodgen: 263-265).

From this perspective, people are naturally reasonable and virtuous, but are corrupted by the perverse complexity of society. In the theological variant of primitivism, Adam and Eve's initial sin corrupted mankind. Certainly, the notion that mankind was better off in a previous epoch has been present in Western philosophy throughout most of history. Ovid's vision of the Golden Age, and the biblical Garden of Eden both refer to earlier states of human innocence and happiness (Fairchild: 2-7).

Robert Nisbet denies the centrality of primitivism in the history of Western philosophy. He claims that the idea that Augustinian Christianity is incompatible with the idea of secular progress is a "tenuous misconception" (Nisbet, 1969: 90-91).[3] Nisbet asserts that for nearly three thousand years the idea of progress has been the most important idea in the Western world (Nisbet, 1980: 4). Progress simply means that "civilization has moved, is moving, and will move in a desirable direction" (Bury: 2). In spite of the disagreement about the historical emergence of the idea of progress, there is a widespread consensus that it became the conerstone of the Enlightenment world view.

Primitivism and progressivism both integrated reports of alien cultures into their normative systems. Primitivism integrated Indians through the notion of the noble savage. A noble savage is a free and wild being who has natural virtues which undermine the values of civilization (Fairchild: 2). Primitivists emphasized the simplicity, honesty, and equality of savage life, while progressivists utilized the same sources, emphasizing savages' uniformity, poverty, stupidity, and cruelty (Meek:39).

Other normative evaluations of the course of history are basically variations of primitivism or the idea of progress. Cyclical theories of history, combine the two, and theological notions of an immutable universe assert that no change in the world's moral worth occurs between the Fall and the Second Coming. All of these normative evaluations of societal development were present in the ethnographic and theoretical literature that Rousseau and Ferguson read. I will now describe specific examples of such literature, in order to illustrate

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[3]For examples of this "misconception", see Bury, p. 7 and Radoslav, pp. 2-3, 32.

the intellectual heritage of the Discourse and Essay. This heritage consists of empirical, theoretical, and normative elements, but I structure my discussion along theoretical lines.

B. THEOLOGY AND SOCIETY

Genesis is the starting point for Christian theological explanations of the origin and development of society. From this perspective, God created the world around 4004 B.C., expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden in 3875 B.C., and caused a great flood in 2348 B.C., thereby making all peoples and societies originate on Noah's ark (Bossuet: 9-11). The fundamental characteristic of early theological explanations of society is that divine will ordains the nature of the social world. For Thomas Aquinas, God created and controls the entire universe, from planets and inanimate objects, to plants and animals, to humans and angels (Fink: 15). The social order is part of this hierarchical universe, which men can understand to a limited extent, via direct revelations such as the Ten Commandments, and the natural laws which human reason is capable of discovering (Fink: 16-17).

The idea of a 'great chain of being' represents Christian notions of an ordered universe. The great chain of being is the notion that all living and inanimate objects have a hierarchically defined place in God's universe. A simple example of this hierarchy could descend from God to angels, to kings, to men, to women, to beasts, to inanimate objects. This conception of natural and social reality is nicely summarized by Ulysses' famous speech on degree in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida (1603). Ulysses' speech addresses the inability of the Athenians to storm Troy, and suggests that:

> The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
> Observe degree, priority, and place,
> Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
> Office and custom, all in line of order. (I,iii,85-88)

If this divinely inspired order is disrupted, Ulysses asserts, natural disasters and social chaos will result. Ulysses describes this chaos:

> Force should be right, or rather right and wrong,

> Between whose endless jar justice resides,
> Should lose their names, and so should justice too;
> Then everything include itself in power,
> Power into will, will into appetite,
> And appetite, an universal wolf,
> So doubly seconded with will and power,
> Must make perforce an universal prey
> And last eat up himself. (I,iii,116-124)

The survival of the world depends upon the maintenance of a universal hierarchy.

The great chain of being implies that society is immutable, because if God structured the universe, the universe would not need to change (Lovejoy, 1950: 242-243). Lovejoy asserts that a hierarchical and static conception of the world permeated social philosophy for much of the pre-Darwinian history of the West (Lovejoy, 1950: vii). However, Nisbet rejects this characterization of early Christian theology. He analyzes Augustine's City of God (fifth century), and finds a theory of secular progress, including unilinear stages, cumulative material and spiritual advances, and the inevitable improvement of man's conditions (Nisbet, 1980: 47-76). Whichever conception actually dominated Medieval thought, the notion of a static universe, where everything had its place in God's plans, received a great shock by the discovery of radically different cultures in the New World.

Georges Gusdorf asserts that the discovery of alien cultures "s'agissait, pour les sages de ce temps, d'une première expérience de la mort de Dieu" (Gusdorf, in Duchet: 9). The existence of cultural diversity challenged the biblical conception of history, and Christian faith about the universality of human nature and social norms (Hodgen: 208-209, 254). The basic theological response to this problem combined theories of successive migrations with a notion of cultural degeneration (Hodgen: 378-379). American societies were primitive and strange because they lost contact with mainstream Christian culture, and forgot the skills and beliefs initially given to man by god. Bossuet and Lafitau were two theologians who wrote after Europe's discovery of alien cultures, and influenced Rousseau and Ferguson.

Jacques-Benigne Bossuet's Discourse on Universal History (1681) combines sacred and narrative history, and follows mankind from creation through antiquity, and into the modern world (Bossuet: 9-109). Bossuet's succint conclusion is that "everything must be

ascribed to a Providence" (Bossuet: 373). God's control over history is so complete that human leaders can "neither control the configuration of circumstances bequeathed to them by past centuries, nor can they forsee the course of the future, much less control that course" (Bossuet: 375). This sense of history as beyond men's control surfaces again in the natural history tradition.

Non-Western cultures play an extremely limited role in Bossuet's universal history. The tower of Babel incident causes the creation of different languages, and the migrations of Noah's three sons explain the dispersion of population around the world (Bossuet: 11). Contemporary cultural differences result from differential social changes. Bossuet gives the following description of early human history:

> Everything was beginning. All of ancient history--not only in these first times but for a long time to come-- shows manifest signs that the world was new. We see how laws are made, how manners become refined, how empires are formed. Slowly, mankind is emerging from ignorance; men learn from experience; the arts are invented or perfected. As men multiply, the earth gradually becomes populated. Mountains and deep valleys are passed, rivers and eventually the seas are crossed, and new settlements are founded. The earth, but an immense forest in the beginning, takes on a new form: clearings make room for fields, pastures, hamlets, villages, and finally, towns. Men learn to trap some of the animals and to tame others and teach them how to work....With the taming of animals, man also learned how to improve fruits and plants; even metals were made pliable for his use, and he gradually made all of nature serve him (Bossuet: 12).

These divinely inspired advances were maintained in the originally inhabited parts of the world, but the knowledge of God and secular advances decayed in other areas (Bossuet: 12). Bossuet defends the biblical conception of history. Society emerges and develops through God's grace, and cultural differences result from degeneration among peoples who have migrated and forgotten the advances which God ordained for mankind.

Joseph Lafitau reaches similar conclusions, but explains the existence of American Indians much more seriously than Bossuet. Lafitau's Customs of the American Indians Compared with the Customs of Primitive Times (1724) was an important source of ethnographic detail for Enlightenment philosophers. Early in his book, Lafitau laments the poor quality of existing travel narratives, which depict savages as "people without law, social

control, or any form of government; in a word, as people who have scarcely anything except the appearance of men" (Lafitau: 28). His own book opposes this tendency by giving detailed descriptions of the savages' character, religion, government, marriage, education, occupations, warfare, illnesses, medicine, death, burial rites, and languages.

Lafitau's book goes beyond ethnographic detail. He uses his data to find parallelisms between contemporary savages and ancient civilizations (Lafitau: 27). This exercise attempts to prove that religion and human nature are universal, even if they are somewhat corrupted among the American Indians (Lafitau:,29). In doing so, Lafitau hopes to undermine the atheist argument that since savages have no Christian faith, religion is unnecessary (Lafitau: 29). Lafitau's work has some interesting, though not systematic implications about societal development. By asserting that America was populated by the ancient Greeks, Lafitau suggests that mankind has greatly changed the character of the world which God created (Lafitau: 45-49, 79-80). Lafitau provides no clear theory about how various parts of the world progressed or degenerated differentially, and this ambiguity implies that the creator of the world may have left its caretaking to man's imperfect hands.

C. SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

The possibility of human agency affecting the course of history is a key element of the contract theories of Hobbes, Pufendorf, and Locke. As a point of transition between theological and contractarian explanations of societal development, I will introduce the writings of Michel de Montaigne, who was neither a theologist nor a contractarian. Published in the 1580's, several of Montaigne's influential essays used ethnographic data to question theories of natural law, and criticize European society.

Like most of the writers yet to be discussed, Montaigne never visited America. His ethnographic sources were oral reports from several men who had been to South America, and personal interviews with 'canibals' who had been brought to Rouen (Montaigne: 202-204, 214-215). Montaigne's descriptions of Americans have a very wide range. In "Of

Moderation," Montaigne writes about savages' "horrible cruelties" and bloody sacrifices (Montaigne: 201). In "Of Canibals," he describes South America as a nation

> which has no manner of traffic; no knowledge of letters; no science of numbers; no name of magistrate or statesman; no use for slaves; neither wealth nor poverty; no contracts; no successions; no partitions; no occupation but that of idleness; only a general respect of parents; no clothing; no agriculture; no metals; no use of wine or corn. The very words denoting falsehood, treachery, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, pardon, unheard of (Montaigne: 206).

To this negative form of description of American society, Montaigne adds details about savages' health, diet, housing, dances, occupations, religion, warfare, language, and polygamy (Montaigne: 206-214).

Montaigne's description of savages is exotic and sympathetic. Even when describing torture, Montaigne asserts that savages are more virtuous than civilized people. He refers to the horrors of Catholic repressions in Europe, and states that civilized men surpass savages "in every sort of barbarity" (Montaigne: 209-210). Montaigne uses savages to explicitly criticize European society. He quotes canibals who visited Europe as remarking surprise that the poor and powerless "could suffer such injustice, and that they did not seize the others by the throat, or set fire to their houses" (Montaigne: 215). Montaigne supports his normative evaluation of society with a cyclical vision of history. In "Of Coaches," he writes that "'our world has of late discovered another, no less big and full-limbed than himself, yet so fresh and infantile that he is still being taught his ABC" (Montaigne: 369). He continues this organic analogy by stating that the Old World is waning while the New World is attaining strength, but that the Old may have altered the New World's natural life span (Montaigne: 369-370).

Montaigne's essays are important for Rousseau and Ferguson in several ways. Rousseau's Discourse reproduces some of Montaigne's passages. [6] Normatively, Montaigne's social criticism, as well as his recognition of the problem of cultural relativity when judging

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[6]For example, compare the passages on inequality in Montaigne, pp. 214-215, and in Rousseau, p. 137; or on the role of intelligence in causing misery in Montaigne, p. 200, and in Rousseau, p. 85.

other peoples, and his use of a conception of nature as the ultimate basis of moral worth, anticipate themes in Rousseau's and Ferguson's work (Montaigne: 205). Theoretically, he uses ethnographic data to challenge existing natural law explanations of society, although he does not provide any coherent alternative. Montaigne's criticism of natural law is summarized in the following passage on cultural diversity:

> There is nothing so extreme and horrible, but is found received and allowed by the custom of some nation. It is credible that there be natural laws; as may be seen in other creatures, but in us they are lost (Montaigne, in Hodgen: 209).

Excluding mankind from natural law prepares the way for social contract explanations of societal development.

Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan (1651) replaces the concept of natural law with a notion of the "right of nature." This right is "the liberty each man hath, to use his own power, as he will himself, for the preservation of his own nature" (Hobbes: 84). Man naturally has the right to do or to have anything (Hobbes: 85).[7] Natural right predominates in the state of nature, where men live without external authority, in a condition of war of all against all (Hobbes: 82). Hobbes asserts that in the state of nature,

> there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short (Hobbes: 82).

Hobbes later adds morality, property, and justice to the list of inexistant properties in the state of nature (Hobbes: 83).

However, Hobbes' state of nature is not a purely abstract negation of European civilization. For those who doubt the empirical existence of such a state, Hobbes points to

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[7]Natural laws do exist, but they are not respected without an absolute authority to enforce them (Hobbes: 109). Hobbes enumerates nineteen such natural laws (ex. seek peace, fulfill contractual obligations), and summarizes them with the maxim, "Do not that to another, which thou wouldest not have done to thyself" (Hobbes: 85-103).

contemporary American Indians, who actually live "in that brutish manner" (Hobbes: 83). The transition from nature into a political commonwealth occurs due to men's foresight that they could improve their lives and chances of preservation by "getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war" (Hobbes: 109). The passage out of the state of nature is realized by a contractural agreement whereby all men agree to submit their wills, rights, and judgements to an absolute authority, who then settles disputes and maintains peace (Hobbes: 112). Hobbes provides a coherent, secular theory of societal development. Mankind develops from a state of nature, empirically represented by American savages, to a state of political society. This transition is caused by the actions and choices of men. Hobbes' normative evaluation of the development of society is very positive. His theoretical and normative system was an important point of departure for Rousseau and Ferguson, as well as for Samuel Pufendorf, another seventeenth century contract theorist.

Pufendorf's Law of Nature and Nations (1688) includes a concise social contract theory of societal development. Pufendorf describes the state of nature quite differently than Hobbes. He asserts that the fundamental right to do or have anything to ensure one's preservation is limited to those actions or possessions which do not injure others' rights (Pufendorf: 158). He also suggests that a pure, asocial state of nature never actually existed, since the Bible describes early man as pre-political but not asocial (Pufendorf: 162-163). Pufendorf asserts that the historically accurate state of nature "is not one of war, but one of peace" (Pufendorf: 169, 172). This peace exists because men are naturally bound to the following laws:

> A man shall not harm one who is not injuring him; he shall allow everyone to enjoy his own possessions; he shall faithfully perform whatever he has agreed upon; and he shall willingly advance the interests of others, so far as he is not bound by more pressing obligations" (Pufendorf: 172).

Sociability, justice, compassion, and the sanctity of property and contracts are fundamental to Pufendorf's state of nature.

In spite of the peaceful character of nature, men eventually want to create a different form of society. Nature is relatively miserable, because its peace is tenuous, and frequently broken by man's "evil genius" (Pufendorf: 157, 176). Changing to a more secure, and politically formal society is not a natural process, because a complicated series of contractual agreements must be executed (Pufendorf: 957). First, a community of citizens makes a unanimous covenant to live together, and seek some form of common administration and leadership (Pufendorf: 974). After this first pact, the citizens form a democratic assembly in order to choose, by majority decision, the form of government they will adopt (Pufendorf: 974-975). Finally, a second pact establishes the political state by binding all members to obey the rulers, and obligating rulers to protect their citizens (Pufendorf: 975).

Pufendorf's descripiton of societal development reconciles rational contract theory with biblical history. His state of nature is based on the Bible rather than on contemporary ethnographic sources. Pufendorf departs from Hobbes' contract theory by having a social and benevolent state of nature, a two-step contractual process, and a more open-ended vision of the forms of government which may adequately rule advanced political societies. These departures show the flexibility of the contractarian paradigm, which takes yet another form in the writings of John Locke.

Locke's second treatise on government, "An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent, and End of Civil Government" (1690), depicts a very pleasant state of nature. Locke asserts that the original state of men is a

> State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man (Locke: 287).

People are naturally equal, social, and rational (Locke: 287, 336-337). Natural societies are governed by the simple law that "no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions" (Locke: 289).

Locke defends his assertions about a social, yet pre-political state of nature through reference to existing American cultures (Locke: 353). He describes savages at different levels

of political sophistication to illustrate that men are naturally equal, and only submit to authority on a voluntary and limited basis (Locke: 353,355). Although the state of nature is good, Locke suggests that men decide to leave it out of a concern "for the mutual Preservation of their Lives, Liberties, and Estates" (Locke: 368). Political institutions are necessary because the lack of external authority in nature leads to problems in the resolution of conflicts (Locke: 293-294).[1]

People tend to form political societies because such unions have external authorities to settle interpretive disputes about the law of nature, and maintain security. The transition to political society occurs through a contractual agreement. Locke defends the historical accuracy of the social contract by asserting that "Government is everywhere antecedent to Records" (Locke: 352). Locke writes,

> When any number of Men have so consented to make one Community, or Government, they are thereby presently incorporated, and make one Body Politick, wherein the Majority have a Right to act and conclude the rest (Locke: 348-350).

Leaving the state of nature is voluntary, but once in political society, majority rules (Locke: 348-350). Even leaders are subject to the will of the majority, since the people have a right to revoke the authority of anyone who miscarries that authority (Locke: 445). Locke distinguishes between politics and civil society, since once societies are established, the dissolution of political institutions does not necessitate the dissolution of society (Locke: 424-425).

D. NATURAL HISTORY

The theory of societal development advanced by natural historians in the mid 1700's is schematically similar to that of social contract theory. Societies advance from initially primitive conditions to civil societies with complex political, legal, and economic institutions.

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[1]Locke makes the following distinction between the state of nature and the state of war: "Want of a common Judge with Authority, puts all Men into a State of Nature; Force without Right, upon a Man's Person, makes a State of War, both where there is, and is not, a common Judge" (Locke: 299). Thus, the state of war can occur either in nature, or in political societies.

The key difference between the two theoretical approaches is their explanations of the transition between rude and civil society. Natural history replaces the social contract with a long, unintended accumulation of human actions and culture as the key to societal development. [9] Rousseau and Ferguson are part of this movement away from contract theory, but I will use Montesquieu, Turgot, and Adam Smith to illustrate natural history's basic features.

Montesquieu provides the point of departure for natural history, both theoretically and normatively. Theoretically, he convincingly criticizes asocial notions of natural man. In his Persian Letters (1721), Montesquieu writes that inquiries about the origins of society are absurd, since people are "associated with each other at birth; a man is born in his father's home, and stays there: there you have society and the cause of society" (Montesquieu, 1973: 175). Normatively, Montesquieu combines social criticism with fundamental optimism about the benefits of advanced societies. Persian Letters contains passages which lampoon the King, the Pope, tax farmers, priests, poets, Don Juans, and the hurried, acquisitive, and deceitful nature of French citizens in general (Montesquieu, 1973: 72-73, 105-108, 119, 152, 168, 195). However, the book also contains passages which defend the progressive nature of civilization, and it ends with a series of letters which condemn the alternative form of social organization found in Persia (Montesquieu, 1973: 193-198, 270-281).

Rousseau and Ferguson both cite Montesquieu's Spirit of the Laws (1748). Early in this book, Montesquieu distinguishes between the natural and human worlds. When speaking of universal laws, Montesquieu says,

> the intelligent world is far from being so well governed as the physical. For though the former has also its laws, which of their own nature are invariable, it does not conform to them so exactly as the physical world. This is because, on the one hand particular intelligent beings are of a finite nature, and consequently liable to error; and on the other, their nature requires them to be free agents (Montesquieu, 1949: 2).

Natural laws do exist, but they are restricted to the physical realm, and are frequently

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[9] For a more detailed discussion of the eighteenth century theory and methodology known alternately as natural history, conjectural history, or histoire raisonée, see Hopfl (1978) and Nisbet (1969), pp 139-141.

transgressed by humans (Montesquieu, 1949: 3).

Man is "formed to live in society," but a pre-social state can be imagined in order to discover the content of natural laws (Montesquieu, 1949: 3). Montesquieu isolates four laws of nature: timidity and peacefulness; knowledge of physiological needs and the resulting search for nourishment; natural sociability derived from emotional and sexual desires; and a rational desire to live in society (Montesquieu, 1949: 4-5). The final two laws pass man naturally into society, and this passage nullifies the first law so that a state of war commences (Montesquieu, 1949: 5). Domestic and international conflicts stimulate the development of political, civil, and international laws (Montesquieu, 1949: 5). Government and laws are universal in existence, though not in content, as evidenced by their existence even among savages (Montesquieu, 1949: 5-6).

Montesquieu's key departure from social contract theory lies in his explanation of how political and legal institutions come about. For Montesquieu, government can be understood as a "conjunction of wills," but it did not emerge through a contractual agreement (Montesquieu, 1949: 6). Rather, political and legal institutions evolve from existing geographic and social conditions. Montesquieu enumerates the following pre-existing factors which affect law and government: climate, soil quality, people's characters, national size and location, the dominant means of subsistence, religion, customs, degree of wealth and commerce, and those legal and political institutions which are already in place (Montesquieu, 1949: 6-7). Montesquieu provides the foundation for a theory of societal development which transcends both natural law and social contract theory. By including pre-existing social conditions as causes of current institutions, Montesquieu implies a cumulative vision of history (Toulmin: 117). However, societal development is not his main concern, and the Spirit of the Laws does not contain a coherent theory of how institutions evolve.

Turgot provides a more systematic theory of social change. Turgot's essay "On Universal History" (early 1750's) follows Montesquieu by distinguishing mankind from the natural world. He asserts that the natural world is characterized by a set of cycles which

maintain the system in equilibrium (Turgot: 63). The following passage illustrates the social world's uniqueness,

> Possessor of the treasure-house of signs, which (Man) has had the ability to multiply almost to infinity, he can assure himself of the possession of all his acquired ideas, communicate them to other men, and transmit them to his successors as a heritage which is always being augmented. A continual combination of this progress with the passions, and with the events they have caused, constitutes the history of the human race (Turgot: 63).

History is a progression of culture, and each generation is built upon the foundations of preceding generations.

Turgot refers to the American Indians to support his progressive vision of human history. He writes,

> A glance over the earth puts before our eyes, even today, the whole history of the human race, showing us traces of the steps and monuments of all the stages through which it has passed from barbarism, still in existence, of the American peoples, to the civilization of the most enlightened nations of Europe. Alas, our ancestors and the Pelasgians who preceded the Greeks were like the savages of America! (Turgot: 89).

Savages provide a barbaric point of comparison against which to praise the progressive and benevolent nature of European history. Turgot suggests that refinement is superior to barbarism, and that the alleged egalitarianism of savage societies reflects their inferiority, since inequality is necessary for the full realization of the benefits of division of labour, exchange, and capital accumulation (Meek: 70-71).

Turgot's theory of societal development combines biblical history with an analysis of material modes of subsistence. The history of current societies begins after the Flood, when people obtain their subsistence by hunting and gathering (Turgot: 65). Due to the low densities of wild game, hunting groups are very nomadic, and frequently split into smaller, geographically isolated societies (Turgot: 65-66). Eventually, people learn the advantages of herding, and where appropriate animals are found, the pastoral way of life is introduced (Turgot:66). Similarly, pastoral people eventually discover the advantages of agriculture, and this leads to fixed settlements, urbanization, trade, division of labour, inequality, and more formal government (Turgot:68-69). For Turgot, society evolves based upon successive

advances in the means of acquiring subsistence. However, Turgot does not provide a materialistic explanation of the transition between different modes. Progress is assured because impressions, experiences, and reflections accumulate over time due to innate innovative drives in the human mind (Manuel: 17-18). Geniuses are the dynamic agents of progress, because they are able to articulate and pass on new realizations (Manuel: 26). Genius is evenly distributed throughout history, but can only be actualized when linguistic and social conditions are favorable (Manuel: 27-29). The theory of genius allows Turgot to explain historical transitions and societal diversity, but Turgot ultimately relies on Providence as the initial source of mankind's progression (Turgot: 69).

Adam Smith provides a materialist version of Turgot's notion that history is a reflection of the invisible hand of Providence. In his university lectures of the 1750's, Smith asserts that society passes through four stages: hunting, herding, agriculture, and commerce (Meek: 117,126). The transition between these stages is a teleological unfolding of man's use of reason to find the most efficient means of assuring subsistence (Smith, in Meek: 117-118). When population growth makes "the chase too precarious," hunters naturally think of taming some of the wild animals they had been chasing (Smith, in Meek: 117). Similarly, "when a society becomes numerous they would find a difficulty in supporting themselves by herds and flocks. Then they would naturally turn themselves to the cultivation of land..." (Smith, in Meek: 118). The natural progression toward more efficient production also explains the emergence of division of labour, and the full development of commercial societies based on specialization and exchange (Smith, in Meek: 118).

Smith's stages of development parallel Turgot's, but Smith does not rely on Providence or Genius to structure history. Instead, he asserts that population naturally tends to increase, forcing men to discover more efficient means of producing necessities. The natural evolution of more efficient production creates progressive changes in other aspects of social life, such as law, government, and the institution of property (Meek: 119-123). Smith supports his ideas about societal development with data from travel literature. In the Theory

of Moral Sentiments (1759), Smith writes that the savage

> is in continual danger; he is often exposed to the greatest extremities of hunger, and frequently dies of pure want....Before we can feel much for others, we must at some measure be at ease ourselves. If our own misery pinches us very severely, we have no leisure to attend to that of our neighbor: and all savages are too much occupied with their own wants and necessities to give much attention to those of another person (Smith: 205).

Smith cites examples of savages' torture and infantacide to illustrate their lack of compassion, and he asserts that savages' tenuous hold on subsistence makes them deceitful in their social relations (Smith: 206-210). Advanced civilization has its drawbacks, such as moral depravity and the prevalence of mind-dulling occupations, but these problems can be avoided by the public education that commercial wealth makes possible (Smith: 61; West: 425,433). Smith, like Turgot and the contractarians, has a benevolent evaluation of historical societal development.

E. CONCLUSION

The essay to this point provides the empirical, normative, and theoretical antecedents of Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings on societal development. [16] As Part II will illustrate, this intellectual history is necessary but not sufficient to understand and explain the Discourse and Essay. Ethnographic sources of information about primitive societies were sufficiently diverse that writers could use them to support opposing theories or normative evaluations of social change. Normatively, the idea of progress dominated most writings by 1750, but primitivism and notions of an immutable universe were still common. Theoretically, naturalistic explanations of societal development were emerging, but theology and social contract theory were still important.

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[16]The notable omission in this discussion is the emergence of evolutionary thought in the natural sciences. Writers such as Buffon and Maupertuis influenced notions of societal development, but to investigate the literature about the origins and biological evolution of human beings would unduly extend the scope of Part I of this essay. Readers wishing more information on this tradition in science should consult Horowitz (1987); Plattner (1979); Bowler (1974 and 1984); and Toulmin (1965).

Most of the writers considered thus far had pre-modern conceptions of development and history. Theologians saw a world created by God. The world may have changed since Noah descended from his ark, but apart from divine intervention theologians do not explain why it has changed, nor suggest that it changes in a systematic manner. Neither do contract theorists have a conception of history in the modern sense. For contractarians, history is merely man in the state of nature followed by man in political society, separated by a monumental agreement. However, the natural history tradition does regard history as the progressive accumulation of human culture. Turgot arranged history into a sequence of stages based upon the mode of production, and Adam Smith suggested that population pressure was the mechanism that drove history through its teleological course. Rousseau's and Ferguson's places in the midst of this theoretical discovery of history raise two key issues to remember when reading Part II of this essay. First, Adam Smith taught and was a friend of Ferguson, but had no contact with Rousseau prior to the writing of the Discourse. Second, the Discourse was a primary source for Ferguson's Essay. Thus, Ferguson worked from a more sophisticated foundation in natural history than Rousseau.

III. Part II: TEXTUAL INTERPRETATION

A. INTRODUCTION

Existing interpretations of the Discourse and Essay vary widely. Some writers view Rousseau as a primitivist, while others suggest that he is a proto-marxist progressivist (Meek: 129; Lovejoy, 1923: 179-182; Fairchild: 121-136; Colletti: 151-164; Duchet, 1970: 19, 375-376). The Discourse is sometimes praised as a central document in the analytical discovery of history, and sometimes dismissed as ahistorical philosophy (Horowitz: 31-32, 36, 43-44; Lovejoy, 1923: 175; Kelly: 32). Ferguson's vision of history is seen alternatively as progressive or cyclical (Bernstein: 101-116; Hodgen: 507-509; Forbes in Ferguson, 1966: xv). Authors see the Essay as systematic developmental sociology, conservative Calvinist preaching, moralism, or political constitutionalism (Macrae: 20; Sher: 196-199; Leigh: 14-16; Kettler, 1977: 439; McKowell: 536-541). Divergent interpretations of the Discourse and Essay exist partly because of the inherent ambiguity of the books, and partly because of the pre-theoretical baggage of different interpreters. Both books are filled with highly quotable, and frequently contradictory passages which can be used to construct several coherent, yet mutually exclusive interpretations. Although Rousseau's and Ferguson's ambiguities reinforce any interpretive biases, I suggest that I have found an interesting and valid way of reading these works.

My interpretation of the Discourse and Essay separates the analytical and normative components of the works. Despite the confoundedness of the two components, it is useful to isolate their depictions of the origins and characteristics of societal development from their speculations about whether such development is good or bad. Thus, I will first follow the theoretical structure of the Discourse and Essay, from their rejection of social contract theory, to their assertions about man's nature and initial conditions, to the changes and underlying forces which characterize the emergence and evolution of civil society. Then, I will consider Rousseau's and Ferguson's normative evaluations of societal development.

B. FROM SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY TO HUMAN NATURE

Rousseau and Ferguson begin their writings on historical societal development with a critique of contractarianism. They use an identical strategy to undermine social contract theory: deny the empirical existence of the state of nature, and reject the possibility of a rational contract prior to the existence of society itself. Rousseau suggests that the state of nature is typically an anachronism, whereby philosophers assign features of civil society to nature. He also questions the empirical existence of the state of nature altogether. In his introduction, Rousseau makes these criticisms very clear:

> The philosophers who have examined the foundations of society have all felt it necessary to go back to the state of nature, but none of them has succeeded in getting there. Some have not hesitated to attribute to men in the state of nature the concept of just and unjust, without bothering to show that they must have had such a concept, or even that it would be useful to them. Others have spoken of the natural right each has to keep and defend what he owns without saying what they mean by 'own'. Others again, starting out by giving the stronger authority over the weaker, promptly introduce government, without thinking of the time that must have elapsed before the words 'authority' and 'government' could have had any meaning among men. Finally, all these philosophers talking ceaselessly of need, greed, oppression, desire and pride have transported into the state of nature concepts formed in society. They speak of savage man and they depict civilized man. It has not even entered the heads of most of our philosophers to doubt that the state of nature once existed, yet it is evident from reading the Scriptures that the first man, having received the light of reason and precepts at once from God, was not himself in the state of nature (D: 78).

Ferguson agrees that the state of nature is a fiction created by philosophers. His opening paragraph in the Essay criticizes speculations about "the supposed departure of mankind from the state of their nature" (E: 1). He describes the state of nature according to Rousseau and Hobbes, and suggests that

> The desire of laying the foundation of a favorite system, or a fond expectation, perhaps, that we may be able to penetrate the secrets of nature, to the very source of existence, have, on this subject, led to many fruitless inquiries, and given rise to many wild suppositions. Among the various qualities which mankind possess, we select one or a few particulars on which to establish a theory, and in framing our account of what man was in some imaginary state of nature, we overlook what he has always appeared within the reach of our own observation, and in the records of history (E: 2).

Rousseau and Ferguson criticize the notion of the state of nature, but they both supplant it

with parallel concepts.[11] Rousseau strips man of all vestiges of civilization, and describes him "as he must have emerged from the hands of nature" (D: 81). Ferguson surveys ethnographic and historical evidence to identify the "original character of mankind" (E: 75).

Rousseau and Ferguson also suggest that the social contract could not have been agreed upon in the rational manner which contractarians assert. Rousseau discusses the complexity of metaphysical principles contained in most versions of social contract, and ridicules the assumption that "men must have employed in establishing society an intelligence which is developed only with the greatest difficulty, and among very few people within the bosom of society itself" (D: 69). While Rousseau rejects the plausibility of contract due to the limited foresight and intelligence of men prior to civil society, Ferguson asserts that social institutions could not have had a purely rational foundation. Society is natural to man, and social integration is ensured by the emotional bonds derived from interaction, rather than cold reflection about the advantages of "commerce and mutual support" (E: 16-19). The impossibility of contract, and the rejection of the contractarian state of nature, form the core of Rousseau's and Ferguson's critique of contract theory, and lead to alternative theories of societal development.

Human nature is the cornerstone of societal development for Rousseau and Ferguson. Human nature determines man's initial conditions on earth, structures historical changes, and provides a normative foundation for the evaluation of various societies. The Discourse and Essay both depict man as a dual creature, composed of natural characteristics, and socially constructed traits which are added to man's essence over history. Rousseau suggests that human nature has been altered by the cumulative nature of history, and warns that "it is no light enterprise to separate that which is original from that which is artificial in man's present

[11]Ferguson, and many authors since him suggest that Rousseau merely changes the characteristics of contract theorists' state of nature (E: 1-2). I would suggest that the debate over whether Rousseau's natural man is an empirical or hypothetical phenomenon is secondary to the fact that some foundation for 'human nature' is essential for Rousseau's theory of history (See Nguyen, pp. 205-220). Although Ferguson criticized Rousseau on this point, he too could not escape the analytical necessity to begin his theory of history with a description of human nature.

nature" (D:68-69). Ferguson asserts that human nature must be found in empirical observations of existing, or documented societies, and warns that when man studies his own nature, he frequently "substitutes hypothesis instead of reality, and confounds the provinces of imagination and reason, of poetry and science" (E: 2). Despite these caveats, both authors spend a great deal of time advancing their own visions of human nature.

ROUSSEAU ON HUMAN NATURE

Part I of Rousseau's Discourse is an extended description of human nature. In a discussion of natural law, Rousseau isolates two key elements of man's nature: "the first gives us an ardent interest in our own well-being and our own preservation, the second inspires in us a natural aversion to seeing any other sentient being perish or suffer, especially if it is one of our own kind" (D: 70). Self-preservation and compassion constitute the foundation of human nature. Later, Rousseau links these principles by suggesting that compassion is the natural sentiment which contributes to the preservation of the entire species. This suggestion is summarized by the maxim "Do good to yourself, with as little possible harm to others" (D: 101).

In addition to these essential characteristics, man's nature comprises certain physical and moral attributes. Physically, natural man is "an animal less strong than some, less agile than others, but on the whole the most advantageously organized of all" (D: 81). Man is naturally strong, fast, agile, robust, and healthy, with highly developed senses of sight, hearing, and smell (D: 82-87). Morally, man is naturally ignorant and amoral. Rousseau writes that

> savages are not wicked precisely because they do not know what it is to be good; for it is neither the development of intelligence, nor the restraint of laws, but the calm of the passions and the ignorance of vice which prevents them from doing evil (D: 99).

Man's mental capacity is at first restricted to instincts, and the animal functions of "perceiving and feeling" (D: 89).

Man's physical self-sufficiency and metaphysical simplicity are reflected in his natural way of life. Rousseau asserts that nature ordained for man a "simple, unchanging, and solitary way of life" (D: 85). Of natural man, Rousseau suggests "the only good things he knows in the universe are food, a female, and repose, and the only evils he fears are pain and hunger" (D: 89). Indeed, the simplicity of man's natural way of life according to Rousseau approaches a complete negation of civil society. Natural man has no social interaction, no conception of property, no sentiments of vanity, esteem, or contempt, no authentic idea of justice, no oppression, no dependence, and only natural inequalities (D: 102,106). Since savages have little knowledge, and no foresight nor curiosity, man's initial conditions have a static tendency (D: 90). Indeed, lack of language and social interaction make the accumulation of knowledge, skills, or inventions impossible (D: 143-144).

However, human nature also contains the elements which, under given circumstances change man's natural characteristics, and transform his initial environment. These elements are "free will" and the "faculty of self-improvement," and they are the characteristics which distinguish mankind from all other species (D: 87-88). Rousseau describes free will in a comparison with animals: "while nature alone activates everything in the operations of a beast, man participates in his own actions in his capacity as a free agent" (D: 87). Man's faculty of self-improvement is the innate capacity to accumulate changes and develop other faculties over time (D: 88). These two elements are at odds with the rest of Rousseau's depiction of human nature. Rousseau explains this paradox in the second part of the Discourse, in which he suggests that the dynamic components of human nature lie dormant until external circumstances awaken them.

FERGUSON ON HUMAN NATURE

Part I of the Essay is entitled "Of The General Characteristics of Human Nature." Ferguson writes that nature, "having given to every animal its mode of existence, its dispositions and manner of life, has dealt equally with those of the human race" (E: 2). He

distinguishes mankind from the beasts, because humans "build in every subsequent age on foundations formerly laid, and, in a succession of years, tend to a perfection in the application of their faculties" (E: 5). In addition to the inherently cumulative nature of human society, Ferguson suggests that man's capacity as a free agent is innate: "art itself is natural to man. He is in some measure the artificer of his own frame, as well as his fortune, and is destined, from the first age of his being, to invent and contrive" (E: 6). The dynamic components of human nature identified by Rousseau are even more natural for Ferguson, since they are active characteristics, not dormant potentialities, in man's initial state.

Indeed, dynamism is at the core of the Essay's depiction of human nature. Ferguson surveys the diversity of climatic, economic, architechtural, and institutional conditions in which people live, and concludes that "while this active being is in the train of employing his talents, and of operating on the subjects around him, all situations are equally natural" (E: 7-8). Change and progression are natural to society, and restless activity is a universal characteristic of man (E: 8-9). Savage and civilized men are equally natural, since the true state of nature "is not a condition from which mankind are for ever removed, but one to which they may now attain; not prior to the exercise of their faculties, but procured by their just application" (E: 9-10). The temporal and spatial diversity of human actions and conditions suggests that man's nature must be found in underlying tendencies, such as toward restless activity, rather than in some specific action or condition.

However, Ferguson does isolate a number of specific characteristics natural to man. Man is naturally rational, communicative, social, moral, integrated into one community and opposed to others, capable of various emotions, and concerned with self-preservation (E: 3,11). These characteristics are systematically elaborated in Part I of the Essay. Inherent, emotional sociability underlies many of these characteristics. Ferguson writes,

> if courage be the gift of society to man, we have reason to consider his union with his species as the noblest part of his fortune. From this source are derived not only the force, but the very existence of his happiest emotions; not only the better part, but almost the whole of his rational character. Send him to the desert alone, he is a plant torn from its roots: the form indeed may remain, but every faculty droops and withers;

the human personage and the human character cease to exist (E: 18-19).

It would seem that man's natural sociability might interfere with his abilities as a restless, free agent acting upon the world. Ferguson himself admits that some individual happiness and freedom must be foregone when they conflict with the "good of society" (E: 57). However, the interests of society and its members

> are easily reconciled. If the individual owes every degree of consideration to the public, he receives, in paying that very consideration, the greatest happiness of which his nature is capable; and the greatest blessing that the public can bestow on its members, is to keep them attached to itself. That is the most happy state, which is most beloved by its subjects; and they are the most happy men, whose hearts are engaged to a community, in which they find every object of generosity and zeal, and a scope to the exercise of every talent, and of every virtuous disposition (E: 58).

Restless activity and sociability are mutually reinforcing principles of human nature and social integration.

SUMMARY OF HUMAN NATURE

The existence of human nature is fundamental to the overall theoretical programs of the Discourse and Essay. Human nature determines mankind's earliest conditions, it structures historical changes, and it provides a normative foundation for evaluating the course of history. Rousseau attains his vision of human nature by hypothetically stripping mankind of its socially and historically accumulated characteristics, while Ferguson finds universal characteristics across a wide number of cultural and historical contexts. Despite these methodological differences, Rousseau's and Ferguson's versions of human nature share certain features. They both assert that self-preservation and compassion are natural dispositions. Also, they suggest that man is a free agent, and human history is cumulative, although for Rousseau these characteristics are merely dormant potentialities until the convergence of certain circumstances. Differences between Rousseau's and Ferguson's views of human nature are that for Rousseau, man is naturally ignorant, amoral, tranquil, and asocial; while for Ferguson man is naturally rational, moral, restless, and social.

C. FROM INITIAL CONDITIONS TO CIVIL SOCIETY

After defining human nature, the Discourse and Essay offer theories of how modern civilizations emerge. Due to their divergent opinions about man's inherent sociability, Rousseau and Ferguson begin their descriptions of human history at different points. Rousseau's version can be summarized as a movement from asocial man to nascent society, to a state of warfare, to civil society, which is based alternatively on a fraudulent social contract, a true contract, or despotic power. Ferguson's alternative is a movement from savage society, to barbarism, to civil society, which may degenerate into despotism. In addition to describing the different stages of societal development, Rousseau and Ferguson explain the driving forces behind the transitions between stages. I will now investigate the descriptions and explanations of historical development contained in the Discourse and Essay.

ROUSSEAU ON SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Rousseau concludes Part I of the Discourse with a statement of intent for Part II. He writes that after having proven

> the social virtues and other faculties that natural man received as potentialities could never have developed by themselves, that in order to develop they needed the fortuitous concurrence of several alien causes which might never have arisen and without which man would have remained forever in his primitive condition, I must now consider and bring together the different chance factors which have...(carried) man and the world from their remote beginnings to the point at which we now behold them (D: 106-107).

The first stage of societal development was the apparition of nascent society. Over a long period of time, the dynamic components of human nature slowly became prevalent. This process of development began because environmental "difficulties soon presented themselves, and man had to learn to overcome them" (D: 109). These difficulties varied according to climate, and made man develop elementary forms of reason (D: 110). The use of reason for the natural concern of self-preservation allowed man "to distinguish the rare occasions when common interest justified his relying on the aid of his fellows" (D: 111). Social interaction began, and people "gradually acquired some crude idea of mutual commitments" (D:111).

After many centuries, the "first slow developments" of reason, industry, language, and sociability began to snowball (D: 112). These accumulated developments resulted in the "epoch of a first revolution, which established and differentiated families" (D: 112). The outcome of the revolution was nascent society, characterized by limited personal property, social organization based upon family units, fixed settlements, increased social interaction, and the emergence of socially derived preferences and passions (D: 112-114). Rousseau suggests that nascent society "is precisely the stage reached by most of the savage peoples known to us" (D: 114). The prevalence of savages at this stage suggests that it was the longest epoch in human history (D: 114-115). The transition from asocial man to nascent society was driven by a natural unfolding of mankind's inherent potentialities. Reason and sociability accumulated naturally from man's capacity as a free agent.

The transition to nascent society was a natural unfolding, but the movement out of this stage of development was a "fatal accident" (D: 115). The end of nascent society was precipitated by a second revolution: the development of metallurgy and agriculture (D: 116). Rousseau's explanation of this second revolution is ambiguous, since savages lack the foresight and industry to develop either metallurgy or agriculture independently (D: 116-117). However, through some remarkable coincidence, agriculture and metallurgy developed simultaneously, driven by the mutually reinforcing needs of a nascent division of labour. [12] Launched by a combination of unintended actions and fortuitous events, the stage of societal development after nascent society was characterized by strict rules of private property, inequality, and a hierarchical division of labour (D: 116-118). Rousseau calls this stage "the most horrible state of war," in which disorder, conflict, violence and oppression prevailed (D: 120).

Rousseau asserts that the state of warfare could not persist forever, since "it is impossible that men should not eventually have reflected on the calamity which had

[12]That is, smelters and forgers needed to eat, and the fewer people involved in agriculture, once the iron workers left, meant that iron needed to be used to increase agricultural productivity (D: 117).

overwhelmed them" (D: 120). Human agents intentionally provided the springs for the transition out of this state of warfare. Disorder ended because

> the rich man, under pressure of necessity conceived in the end the most cunning project that ever entered the human mind: to employ in his favour the very forces of those who attacked him, to make his adversaries his defenders, to inspire them with new maxims, and give them new institutions...(D: 121).

Wealthy people established a fraudulent social contract by convincing the poor to support social institutions which created peace and stability, but ensured oppression and inequality (D: 121-122). Such was the birth of civil society.

The Discourse contains a complex depiction of the characteristics and subsequent developments of civil society. The following passage, which occurs in the context of a discussion of the development of different forms of government, summarizes Rousseau's vision of the evolution of civil society:

> if we follow the progress of inequality in these different revolutions, we shall find that the establishment of law and the right of property was the first stage, the institution of magistrates the second, and the transformation of legitimate into arbitrary power the third and last stage. Thus, the status of rich and poor was authorized by the first epoch, that of strong and weak by the second, and by the third that of master and slave, which is the last degree of inequality, and the stage to which all the others finally lead until new revolutions dissolve the government altogether or bring it back to legitimacy (D: 131).

The first stage represents the fraudulent social contract which founds civil society on the basis of private property and law. Once one such society exists, the rest of the world is forced by competition to unite into societies (D: 122).

Civil society at its initial stage was governed by merely "a few general conventions which all the individuals committed themselves to observe, conventions of which the community made itself the guarantor towards each individual" (D: 124). This arrangement was inherently weak, since criminals could easily avoid prosecution. After a certain period of "inconveniences and disorders," men realized the advantages of entrusting public authority to magistrates (D: 124). People invested certain powers in the hands of civil authorities to protect themselves from oppression, not to voluntarily submit to tyranny (D:124-127).

Intentional human agency established a true contract between people and their leaders. People committed themseleves to certain fundamental laws, and magistrates bound themselves to the just use of power in the public interest (D: 128-129). All magistrates were initially elective, but the specific forms of government, such as monarchy, aristocracy, or democracy evolved according to the "greater or lesser differences which exist between individuals at the moment a government is instituted" (D: 130). Pre-existing social organization therefore influenced the formation of political institutions.

Whatever the form of government established, true contracts between people and their leaders tend to degenerate into despotism. Rousseau founds this tendency on the assertion that "the vices which make social institutions necessary are the same vices which make the abuse of those institutions inevitable" (D: 131). The central vice which Rousseau refers to is the "universal desire for reputation, honours, and promotion" (D: 133). Man's tendency to compare himself with others leads to such negative results as extreme inequality, oppression, taxation, mercenary repression, and prejudices and mutual hatred between the different social orders (D: 134-135). It is out of these conditions that

> despotism, by degrees raising up its hideous head and devouring everything that it had seen to be good and sound in any part of the state, would finally succeed in trampling on both the laws and the people, and establishing itself on the ruins of the republic (D: 134).

The despotic state would be without laws, chiefs, morals, or virtues (D: 134).

Rousseau asserts that the transition to civil society changes both the linear nature of history, and the springs of social change. The Discourse suggests that the development of nascent society is a natural process, while the descent into a state of warfare occurs due to the coincidence of several historical accidents, outside of mankind's control. The rise of civil society occurs as the intentional result of human agency, whereby the masses are duped into accepting the legitimacy of laws protecting private property. At this point, the people unite, in a conscious effort, to construct a true social contract in the political sphere, so that magistrates can protect the interests of all citizens. However, this true contract is threatened

by an inevitable tendency to corruption. The tendency to corruption may result in a decline into despotism, and a return to warfare, or it may be arrested by conscious effort. Human agency is responsible for the emergence and evolution of civil society, but Rousseau does not clarify the circumstances under which the various potential paths may become realized.

FERGUSON ON SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Like the Discourse, Ferguson's Essay depicts societal development as a multi-staged process whose initial stages are linear. All civilizations originate as simple tribes, so the first task in tracing societal development is to "form some general conception of our species in its rude state" (E: 74-75, 81). Ferguson distinguishes two phases in the rude age of mankind (E: 81-82). The savage stage is characterized by hunting, gathering, fishing, or rude agriculture as the mode of subsistence, and by the almost complete absence of property, inequality, or government. In the barbarous stage, private property, inequality, and political institutions are more advanced, and people subsist by herding animals.

Ferguson describes savage society in great detail. Property is limited to personal tools and family cabins, since "the food of tomorrow is yet wild in the forest, or hid in the lake; it cannot be appropriated before it is caught" (E: 82). Where rude agriculture is combined with hunting, land is held in common, and both labour and harvested grains are shared by all families (E: 82-83). Inequality is limited to task-specific and meritocratic differences. An example of the limited nature of inequality among savages is that after a war or hunting expedition, the chief warrior or hunter "returns upon a level with the rest of his tribe; and when the only business is to sleep, or to feed, can enjoy no pre-eminence; for he sleeps and feeds no better than they" (E: 84). Similarly, political subjugation is absent, since power and government are shared according to functionally specific abilities (E: 84-85).

Savages balance personal freedom with integration into a larger community. Ferguson states, "among the North-American nations, every individual is independent; but he is engaged by his affections and his habits in the cares of a family" (E: 85). People in savage

societies tend to be affectionate, generous, kind, and have a great deal of composure in their "ordinary deportment" (E: 87). Ferguson also asserts that among savages, "the foundations of honour are eminent abilities and great fortitude; not the distinctions of equipage and fortune" (E: 89). Early societies have high moral character. Ferguson writes,

> it might be apprehended, that among rude nations, where the means of subsistence are procured with so much difficulty, the mind could never raise itself above the consideration of this subject; and that man would, in this condition, give examples of the meanest and most mercenary spirit. The reverse however, is true. Directed in this particular by the desires of nature, men, in their simplest state, attend to the objects of appetite no further than appetite requires; and their desires of fortune extend no further than the meal which gratifies their hunger (E: 92-93).

Ferguson's portrayal of savages' personal characteristics and social organization is reminiscent of Rousseau's nascent society.

Ferguson's portrayal of savages' lack of foresight is another point at which the Essay recalls Rousseau's Discourse. Ferguson asserts that savages

> study no science, and go in pursuit of no general principles. They even seem incapable of attending to any distant consequences, beyond those they have experienced in hunting or war. They intrust the provision of every season to itself; consume the fruits of the earth in summer; and, in winter, are driven in quest of their prey (E: 89).

Foresight is acquired with the transition to barbarous society. The key development in the transition from savagery to barbarism is the apparition of private property in the means of production. For Ferguson, this apparition is the natural result of man's inherent rationalism and desire for self-preservation. He writes that man's instincts of survival

> are sooner or later combined with reflection and foresight; they give rise to his apprehensions on the subject of property, and make him acquainted with that object of care which he calls his interest. Without the instincts which teach the beaver and the squirrel, the ant and the bee, to make up their little hoards for winter, at first improvident, and, where no immediate object of passion is near, addicted to sloth, he becomes, in process of time, the great storemaster among animals (E: 11-12).

The development of property, and the transition to barbarism, are natural unfoldings of man's inherent potentialities.

Societies "under the first impressions of property" share certain universal characteristics, such as inequality, oppression, reduced social integration, and the replacement

of meritocracy with hereditary power and privilege (E: 97-100). Ferguson's epoch of barbarism is similar to Rousseau's state of warfare. The law of the strongest prevails, all disputes are settled by force, and "every nation is a band of robbers, who prey without restraint, or remorse, on their neighbors" (E: 98). Ferguson describes men in this stage of society as "slavish, interested, insidious, deceitful, and bloody" (E: 103). In spite of the violent disorder of their society, barbarians are not completely miserable, since they maintain affectionate and secure relationships within small communities (E: 105-106).

Movement beyond rude conditions is restricted to societies in temperate climates (E: 108,121). Ferguson spends Parts III through VI of the Essay describing the development and nature of civil societies. He describes the transition to civil society as a multi-faceted phenomenon involving changes in political, legal, social, and economic spheres. In all of these spheres, historical developments are unintended consequences of human actions. Ferguson asserts that,

> like the winds, that come we know not whence, and blow whithersoever they list, the forms of society are derived from an obscure and distant origin; they arise, long before the date of philosophy, from the instincts, not from the speculations of men....Every step and every movement of the multitude, even in what are termed enlightened ages, are made with equal blindness to the future; and nations stumble upon establishments, which are indeed the result of human action, but not the execution of any human design (E: 122).

In the political-legal sphere, Ferguson maintains that "no constitution is formed by concert, no government is copied from a plan" (E: 123). Rather, with respect to political institutions, Ferguson claims that "the seeds of every form are lodged in human nature; they spring up and rise with the season" (E: 123). He is quite specific about the conditions which generate different forms of political establishments and legal constitutions. Existing social conditions such as inequality and national size combine with accidental factors such as individual characters and warfare to shape political institutions (E: 126).

Social and economic changes in the development of civil society also result from gradual and natural processes. The "separation of arts and professions," or division of labour, is the key to commercial advances, because it improves the production process and facilitates

the accumulation of wealth (E: 181-182). As the following passage on the modern division of labour indicates, Ferguson views this development as natural:

> The artifices of the beaver, the ant, and the bee are ascribed to nature. Those of polished nations are ascribed to themselves, and are supposed to indicate a capacity superior to that of rude minds. But the establishments of men, like those of every animal, are suggested by nature, and are the result of instinct, directed by the variety of situations in which mankind are placed. Those establishments arose from successive improvements that were made, without any sense of their general effect; and they bring human affairs to a state of complication, which the greatest reach of capacity with which human nature was ever adorned, could not have projected; nor even when the whole is carried into execution, can it be comprehended in its full extent (E: 182).

Economic institutions are thus the natural result of a long accumulation of human practices.

Once civil society is firmly established, Ferguson's explanation of the dynamics of societal development change radically, and his critique of social contract theory breaks down. Human intentional actions replace unintended consequences as the springs of social change. This abrupt theoretical change is signalled by Ferguson's renunciation of the naturalistic metaphor which had been central to his discussion of the rise of civil society. When speaking of the apparently cyclical nature of history, Ferguson says, "the images of youth, and of old age, are applied to nations; and communities, like single men, are supposed to have a period of life..."(E:208-209). Ferguson objects to this metaphor, and states, "it must be obvious, that the case of nations, and that of individuals, are very different" (E: 209). The natural unfolding which explains the development of civil society is no longer valid. Since nations do not decay due to natural processes, Ferguson investigates the possible causes of the decay of civil society.

Potential sources of societal decay include human fickleness, changing environmental circumstances, the negative effects of the division of labour on social integration and personal ingenuity, and overly tranquil lifestyles (E: 210-211, 218-219). However, the central cause of degeneration is man's own "voluntary neglects and corruptions" (E: 224). Ferguson insists that human agency is responsible for sustaining civil society without decay:

> The institutions of men are, indeed, likely to have their end as well as their beginning: but their duration is not fixed to any limited period; and no nation ever suffered

> internal decay but from the vice of its members. We are sometimes willing to acknowledge this vice in our countrymen; but who was ever willing to acknowledge it in himself? It may be suspected, however, that we do more than acknowledge it, when we cease to oppose its effect, and when we plead a fatality, which at least, in the breast of every individual, is dependent on himself (E: 279-280).

The responsibility of citizens of civil society for the development of their own civilization is like a reversion to social contract theory. Civil society emerges via unintended consequences, but its future depends on the commitment of its citizens to a moral contract.

SUMMARY OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Rousseau and Ferguson advance comparable theories of societal development. There is a linear movement from some initial state, where mankind conforms to specific assumptions about human nature, to civil society, via a stage of societal disorder. The springs of the transition are initially natural forces and unintended consequences of human action. However, the emergence of civil society changes both the linearity of development, and the forces behind social change. Once civil society is established, it may decay into a form of society which resembles earlier developmental stages. With respect to explaining later transitions, Rousseau's critique of social contract theory breaks down earlier, and more decisively than Ferguson's. Rousseau's natural, or accidental evolution is suppressed by the establishment of a fraudulent contract, which dupes the masses into a sort of false consciousness. The future survival or decay of civil society depends upon the voluntary establishment and maintenance of a true contract. Ferguson maintains a naturalistic explanation of development until after civil society is firmly established. At that point, the survival or decay of civil society depends upon people's virtuous actions, and commitment to legal and moral principles (E: 155-156, 263, 264). Ferguson extends Rousseau's rejection of contract theory, but neither writer can explain advanced society without reference to moral and legal commitments.

D. NORMATIVE EVALUATION OF SOCIETAL DEVELOPMENT

Rousseau and Ferguson both view history as a cumulative process. However, progression in the analytical sense should not be confused with progress in the normative sense. Indeed, both of these writers display an ambivalent evaluation of civil society in comparison to man's initial conditions. They use the correspondance of human nature and social organization as the fundamental grounds of judgement, and conclude that people themselves are ultimately responsible for the moral worth of civilization. In describing Rousseau's and Ferguson's normative evaluations of societal development, I will use nascent/savage society and civil society as points of comparison, thereby omitting the obvious negative evaluation of the state of warfare/barbarous society.

ROUSSEAU'S OPINION

The Discourse contains many eloquent passages which suggest that the overall evolution of society is a degenerative process. Rousseau concludes his preface with the following comment on the history of civilized people:

> It is, so to say, the life of your species that I am going to describe, in the light of the qualities which you once received and which your culture and your habits have been able to corrupt but not been able to destroy. There is, I feel, an age at which the individual would like to stand still; you are going to search for the age at which you would wish your whole species had stood still. Disconcerted with your present condition for reasons which presage for your posterity even greater discontent, you will wish perhaps you could go backwards in time - and this feeling must utter the eulogy of your first ancestors, the indictment of your contemporaries, and the terror of those who have the misfortune to live after you (D: 79).

This general statement about the negative character of societal development is followed by an idyllic depiction of the early stages of human history, and by criticisms of civil society.

Rousseau's description of nascent society is very glowing. He calls this stage of development "the golden mean between the indolence of the primitive state, and the petulant activity of our own pride" (D: 115). Domestic arrangements at this point in history "generated the sweetest sentiments known to man, conjugal love and paternal love. Each family became a little society, all the better united because mutual affection and liberty were

its only bonds" (D: 112). Rousseau's utopian description of nascent society contrasts sharply with his critique of civil society.

Part II of the Discourse elaborates several specific criticisms of civil society, beginning with the following statement about private property:

> The first man who, having enclosed a piece of land, thought of saying 'This is mine' and found people simple enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders; how much misery and horror the human race would have been spared if someone had pulled up the stakes and filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: 'Beware of listening to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to everyone and that the earth itself belongs to no one' (D: 109).

Rousseau's normative evaluation of inequality is more complex, but no less critical of civil society. He asserts that inequality based on the social conventions of property, power, wealth, or honour is perverse whenever it is discordant with physical inequality (D: 77, 137). Accordingly, contemporary civil societies are vicious, because a minority of people "gorge themselves with superfluities while the hungry multitude goes in want of necessities" (D: 137). Meritocracy is Rousseau's alternative to this perverse form of inequality. He states, "as all members of the state owe it services proportionate to their talents and their strength, the citizens in turn ought to be honoured and favoured in proportion to their services" (D: 171). Unfortunately, civil society is not structured in such a cooperative mannner. Rousseau suggests that in civil society,

> all men are forced simultaneously to caress and destroy each other, and... duty makes them enemies and interest makes them rogues. If I am answered by the assertion that society is so constituted that each man gains by serving others, I shall reply that that would be all very well but for the fact that he would gain even more by harming them (D: 148).

Inequality and competitive social structures may suppress man's inherent compassion.

A related criticism of civil society is that false values, whereby people compare their merit to those of others, arise out of social interdependence. Dependence is generated in society by the division of labour, and the dominance-subjugation relationships which are prevalent in political institutions (D: 116, 125-128). The following passage, occuring in the

context of a comparison of savage tranquility with civilized anxiety, summarizes Rousseau's criticism of civilized man's comparative values and superfluous desires:

> In order for (a savage) to understand the motives of anyone assuming so many cares, it would be necessary for the words 'power' and 'reputation' to have a meaning for his mind; he would have to know that there is a class of men who attach importance to the gaze of the rest of the world, and who know how to be happy and satisfied with themselves on the testimony of others rather than on their own. Such is, in fact, the true cause of all these differences: the savage lives within himself; social man lives always outside himself; he knows how to live only in the opinion of others, it is, so to speak, from their judgement alone that he derives the sense of his own existence. It is not my subject here to show how such a disposition gives birth to so much indifference to good and evil coupled with such beautiful talk about morality; or how, as everything is reduced to appearances, everything comes to be false and warped; honor, friendship, virtue, and often even vices themselves, since in the end men discover the secret of boasting about vices; or show how, as a result of always asking others what we are and never daring to put the question to ourselves in the midst of so much philosophy, humanity, civility and so many sublime maxims, we have only facades, deceptive and frivolous, honour without virtue, reason without wisdom, and pleasure without happiness (D: 136).

From the depths of these criticisms, one may be astounded by the assertion that Rousseau saw civil society as the best location for the actualization of man's natural potentialities.

Rousseau suggests the possibility for a normatively progressive civil society in several ways. First, he makes several statements about the possibility of improving upon earlier, more natural forms of human life. He asserts that in savage society, "there was neither education nor progress; the generations multiplied uselessly, and as each began afresh from the same starting point, centuries rolled on as underdeveloped as the first ages; the species was already old, and man remained eternally a child" (D: 105). Rousseau reinforces the possibility of progress by listing the positive characteristics of civil society. He states,

> Behold then, all our faculties developed, memory and imagination brought into play, pride stimulated, reason made active and the mind almost at the point of the perfection of which it is capable. Behold all the natural qualities called into action, the rank and destiny of each man established, not only as to the quantity of his possessions and his power to serve or to injure, but as to his intelligence, beauty, strength, skill, merit or talents (D: 118-119).

This description of the merits of civil society is followed by a list of negative attributes, which I have already discussed. The juxtaposition of positive and negative evaluations of civil society is repeated in Rousseau's depiction of savage man. Rousseau has a generally idyllic vision of

nascent society. However, he also frequently mocks savages, primarily due to their stupidity and lack of foresight (D: 90-91, 167). An example of this mockery is Rousseau's tale of the Caribbean Indian who "sells his cotton bed in the morning, and in the evening comes weeping to buy it back, having failed to forsee that he would need it for the next night" (D: 90). Rousseau's depiction of savages and civilized people is paradoxical.

Rousseau summarizes his central paradox in the following passage about the faculty of self-improvement:

> It would be sad for us to be forced to admit that this distinguishing and almost unlimited faculty of man is the source of all his misfortunes; that it is this faculty which, by the action of time, drags man out of that original condition in which he would pass peaceful and innocent days; that it is this faculty, which, bringing to fruition over the centuries his insights and his errors, his vices and his virtues, makes man in the end a tyrant over himself and over nature (D: 88).

Man's unique ability to act freely and improve himself paradoxically leads to his degeneration. Rousseau explicates this paradox in an extended footnote to this passage. He suggests that although man is naturally good, in actuality life is miserable and men are wicked (D: 147). For four pages he enumerates the evils of civil society: violent passions, monstrous luxuries of some, excessive labours of others, poor health, war, bad working conditions, and excessive taxation (D: 149-152).

At the end of this condemnation of society, Rousseau asks the question, "What then? Must we destroy societies, annihilate 'muem' and 'tuem' and return to live in the forests with the bears?" (D: 153) The following complex response to this question is the key to Rousseau's normative evaluation of societal development:

> A conclusion in the style of my adversaries, which I would sooner forestall than permit them to disgrace themselves by drawing. Oh you, to whom the heavenly voice has not made itself heard, and who recognize no other destin, for your species than to complete this brief life in peace; you who can leave your fatal acquisitions, your troubled spirits, your corrupt hearts and your frenzied desires in the midst of cities, reclaim - since it is up to you to do so - your ancient and first innocence; go into the woods and lose the sight and memory of the crimes of your contemporaries, and have no fear of debasing your species in renouncing its enlightenment in order to renounce its vices (D: 153).

Rousseau continues this response by stating that people like him

> will endeavor, by the exercise of virtues which they commit themselves to practice while learning to understand them, to deserve the eternal prize they ought to expect for them; they will respect the sacred bonds of the societies of which they are members; they will love their fellow-men and serve them with all their strength; they will scrupulously obey the laws and the men who are the authors and ministers of the laws (D: 153).

In short, Rousseau and those like him will vigorously support good rulers and institutions, and oppose bad ones (D: 153). Rather than retreat from the desperate conditions of civil society, Rousseau exhorts his readers to act strongly to ensure a more virtuous society.

Rousseau suggests that civil society is the most likely state for the actualization of human potentialities. An enlightened and integrated society allows people to realize the many components of their nature: compassion, self-preservation and improvement, and free agency. The moral worth of any society depends upon the actions of its citizens, and specifically upon their commitment to a true social contract. As the stupidity and carelessness of savages suggests, it is only in civil society that truly dedicated moral action is possible.[13] Civil society may in actuality be worse than nascent society, but it is only in civil society that the possibility of fulfilling human natural potentialities exists.

FERGUSON'S OPINION

Ferguson's normative evaluation of societal development is as complex as Rousseau's. His ambivalence about the relative merits of different levels of development is shown when he writes, "the boasted refinements, then, of the polished age, are not divested of danger. They open a door, perhaps, to disaster, as wide and accessible as any of those they have shut" (E: 231). Ferguson suggests that the tendencies toward corruption, intemperence, and sloth are equally prevalent in the palace and the cave (E: 249-250).

Ferguson's ambivalence when comparing civil and savage society is reproduced when he evaluates certain characteristics unique to civil society. Private property, inequality, and the division of labour all have good and bad effects on society. Property helps eliminate sloth,

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[13]This point is demonstrated by Rousseau's tale of savages hunting together for deer. Any savage would abandon his post, to the detriment of the group's overall welfare, if he saw the opportunity of catching a rabbit for himself (D: 111).

but it can also pervert men's values and stimulate vicious actions (E: 82, 160). Inequality allows certain members of society to attain greatness, while subjugating the masses to wretched conditions (E: 184-186). Division of labour increases national wealth while suppressing the industry, intelligence, and noble sentiments of many citizens, and thereby reducing social integration (E: 181-183, 218, 230).

At times, Ferguson seems to embrace a primitivist philosophy of history. The following passage captures his high opinion of man in his earliest ages:

> With all these infirmities, vices, or respectable qualities, belonging to the human species in its rudest state, the love of society, friendship, and public affection, penetration, eloquence, and courage appear to have been its original properties, not the subsequent effects of device or invention (E: 94).

Savages themselves, Ferguson frequently asserts, prefer their own conditions to civil society, which they would never voluntarily inhabit (E: 46, 95-96, 181). Ferguson makes several specific criticisms of civil society. He asserts that individuals' integration into their community is compromised by the alternative demands of a commercially advanced state. Only in civil society is man "sometimes found a detached and solitary being: he has found an object which sets him in competition with his fellow-creatures, and he deals with them as he does with his cattle and his soil, for the sake of the profits they bring" (E: 19). Alienation of people from one another is one way that civil society divorces people from their own natures.

Civil society also promotes false values. Ferguson suggests that in advanced societies, "we are apt to lose every sense of distinction arising from merit, or even from abilities. We rate our fellow-citizens by the *figure* they are able to make" (E: 252). He continues on this theme by stating that in polite nations, "care of mere fortune is supposed to constitute wisdom; retirement from public affairs, and real indifference to mankind, receive the applauses of moderation and virtue" (E: 257). Although negative aspects of civil society exist, they are not inevitable.

Ferguson asserts that it is possible to improve upon savage societies. He writes that "man is susceptible of improvement, and has in himself a principle of progression, and a

desire of perfection" (E: 8). Enlightenment and cultivation can restrain the most odious of savage passions, and reduce the savage's "disposition to either sloth or enjoyment" (E: 84, 94). The establishment of political and legal institutions improves the working of society. For example, true liberty is possible only in civil society, since "good policy alone can provide for the regular administration of justice, or constitute a force in the state, which is ready on every occasion to defend the rights of its members" (E: 261).

Ferguson seems to have a relativistic view of the merits of different societies. His statement that "no nation is so unfortunate to think itself inferior to the rest of mankind," certainly recognizes the problem of cultural relativity in making normative judgements (E: 204). However, Ferguson does have explicit criteria for judging the moral worth of men and societies. He states, "men are to be estimated not from what they know, but from what they are able to perform; from their skill in adapting materials to the several purposes of life; from their vigour and conduct in pursuing the objects of policy..." (E: 29-30). Ferguson adds that "temperence, prudence, and fortitude" along with "affection and force of mind" are the basic qualities useful to oneself, and one's community (E: 38, 205).

Judging different societies means analyzing the extent to which they promote or undermine these evaluative criteria. Ferguson asserts that the conditions most likely to stimulate moral excellence occur in situations

> where the great sentiments of the heart are awakened; where the characters of men, not their situations and fortunes, are the principal distinction; where the anxieties of interest, or vanity, perish in the blaze of more vigorous emotions; and where the human soul, having felt and recognized its objects, like an animal who has tasted the blood of his prey, cannot descend to pursuits that leave its talents and its force unemployed (E: 39-40).

Ferguson's relativism reflects the difficulty of empirically identifying societies that stimulate these characteristics, not the absence of criteria for normative evaluation.

Ferguson's overall evaluation of societal development is ambivalent, because he asserts that moral excellence may be produced in a variety of contexts. In terms of a general savagery-civilization comparison, Ferguson merely asserts that polished nations may be more

prone to corruption, but they are also more likely to stimulate man's potentialities (E: 251, 84, 216-217). The ultimate moral worth of civil society depends on the actions of its citizens. This responsibility is reflected in the final sentence of the Essay:

> Men of real fortitude, integrity, and ability, are well placed in every scene; they reap, in every condition, the principal enjoyments of their nature; they are the happy instruments of providence employed for the good of mankind; or, if we must change this language, they show, that while they are destined to live, the states they compose are likewise doomed by the fates to survive, and to prosper (E: 280).

SUMMARY OF NORMATIVE EVALUATIONS

The striking ambivalence of Rousseau's and Ferguson's overall evaluations of societal development renders simplistic terms such as primitivism or progressivism useless. Clearly, both men have high opinions of early societies, and suggest that after an inevitable period of violent disorder, society's moral worth varies with the voluntary actions of its citizens. A vision of human nature is the foundation of judgement for both men. Civil society tends to alienate men from certain components of their nature which were present in earlier societies, while making possible a greater actualization of innate human potentiality, since the limitations of savage social organization can be overcome. Interestingly, the overall normative pattern of societal development according to both men parallels Christian theology: an initial state of grace, a fall, and the possibility of redemption through dedicated moral activity.

E. CONCLUSION

Clearly, the Discourse and Essay are very complex books. Normatively, they challenge the notion that societal development is inevitably progressive. Theoretically, they structure history in a set of stages, but neither presents a consistent teleological basis for evolutionary social change. The books juxtapose evolutionary descriptions of early societal development with ahistorical and contractarian explanations of civil society. Ultimately, this theoretical juxtaposition is related to Rousseau's and Ferguson's normative orientations. Neither

Rousseau nor Ferguson fully supports the nature of modern societies. To concede to natural history's logic that society develops in a natural and inevitable manner would have meant abandonning any foundation for criticizing society, and denying the possible role of human agency in changing society.

These conclusions raise important questions about the information needed to adequately explain the Discourse and Essay. With respect to theory, one can recognize previous writers' influence on Rousseau's and Ferguson's ideas, but to call either work a logical extension of previous theories would be an unacceptable simplification. Normatively, the profound ambivalence of both these books toward the moral worth of advanced societies cannot be explained by their intellectual heritage. One must go beyond the history of ideas in order to understand and explain these two complex books. Part III of this essay does so by analyzing Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences and political commitments.

IV. PART III: SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

A. INTRODUCTION

In the final part of this essay, I illustrate how Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences and practical commitments influenced the Discourse and Essay. This exercise advances my central hypothesis by showing how elements in Rousseau's and Ferguson's work which could not be understood or explained within the history of ideas, can be effectively analyzed with a sociological theory of knowledge. First however, I will review some existing explanations of Rousseau's and Ferguson's thought, including macro-historical, social psychological, and psychological variants.

Macro-historical investigations of Enlightenment thought usually begin by outlining important social, economic, and political changes which happened in Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Norbert Waszek's account of the Scottish Enlightenment reconstructs the ideas of Francis Hutcheson, David Hume, Adam Smith, and Adam Ferguson, and asserts that optimism about man's social and progressive nature is central to their thought (Waszek: 30-170). Waszek then asserts that this optimism can be explained by the social, economic, and political history of eighteenth century Scotland. Essentially, the philosophes' confidence in social progress was "an expression of the tremendous achievements that were made in the Scotland of their lifetime" (Waszek: 353). Economically, the linen industry, tobacco trade, and agricultural improvements created rising prosperity (Waszek: 347). This prosperity affected social life through improved diets, housing, health care, educational opportunities, and urban social clubs (Waszek: 348). Politically, the 1688 Revolution and the Union of 1707 led to political stability, liberty, and contentment (Waszek: 349). In summary, "there were plenty of reasons for being optimistic in mid-eighteenth century Scotland" (Waszek: 349). The philosophes were aware of Scotland's improvements, and they translated this awareness into optimistic theories of human nature and social progress (Waszek: 349-353).

Macro-historical explanations of ideas often distort ideas to make them fit conceptual frameworks. For example, Waszek portrtays Hutcheson, Hume, Smith, and Ferguson as a school of writers with a common, optimistic vision of social progress. This interpretation misrepresents Ferguson's Essay. [14] Such simplifications and errors are common when one's sociology of knowledge seeks a purely macro-historical explanation of a 'school of thought.' Clearly, macro-historical factors are unable to adequately deal with men such as Rousseau and Ferguson, whose ideas are atypical of their intellectual milieu.

Charles Camic stresses the need for macro-historical factors to be accompanied by an explanation of the socialization of particular attitudes (Camic: 102-105). In eighteenth century Scotland, structural changes affected large numbers of people, but only a tiny minority of Scots became enlightened (Camic: 98-99). Camic's own social psychological explanation of the Scottish Enlightenment combines macro-historical factors with socialization experiences. He suggests that a commitment to universalism and independence is the defining characteristic of Enlightenment thought, and that the Scottish philosophers acquired this commitment through social experiences at home, at school, and in their early professional lives (Camic: 119). Camic's sociology of knowledge is theoretically sophisticated, but has some practical problems. First, as he admits, good data are not available about the socialization experiences of eighteenth century men (Camic: 9-10). Second, Camic uses a simplistic theory of consciousness. He asserts that individuals who experience rewards in settings which an outsider considers universalistic and independent in nature, will internalize a commitment to the abstract values of universalism and independence. Finally, Camic does not adequately explain the writings of Adam Ferguson, whose early writings show little commitment to independence and universalism (Camic: 53). He recognizes Ferguson's unique position, but only asserts that Ferguson's early success in particular and dependent situations retarded his development as an enlightener (Camic: 160, 189-190, 212-213).

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[14] Waszek bases his interpretation of Ferguson primarily on the Essay, but all of his references are to Parts I and II. Parts III through VI could not realistically be viewed as presenting an optimistic vision of inevitable progress (see Waszek: 170).

Marginalized social class position is a common starting point for social-psychological explanations of ideas which contradict the dominant world view of their age. Lionel Gossman asserts that Rousseau was a "pessimistic evolutionist" who recognized the historicity of society (Gossman: 329,339). Rousseau's pessimism was itself a historical phenomenon, reflecting his own contradictory position in eighteenth century society (Gossman: 313). Rousseau belonged to a social group which was equally opposed to philosophes, aristocrats, and priests (Gossman: 335). Rousseau had humble origins as an artisan's son in Geneva, and his life was a series of subordinate positions such as footman, clerk, music copyist, and literary secretary (Gossman: 335). To support the assertion that Rousseau identified with the lower classes, Gossman quotes the following passage from Rousseau's letter to the wealthy Mme Francueil: "c'est l'état des riches, c'est votre état, qui vole au mien le pain de ses enfants" (Gossman: 337). Gossman explains Rousseau's historical and pessimistic vision of society as an embodiment of the frustrations of "a sizeable, if somewhat amorphous class of people in eighteenth century society" (Gossman: 339).

Richard Sher explains Ferguson's Essay in a manner similar to Gossman's analysis of Rousseau. Sher suggests that Ferguson's writings were shaped by his membership in a social group called the "Moderate literati of Edinburgh" (Sher: 13). The literati included William Robertson, Alexander Carlyle, John Home, and Hugh Blair, and they were all born around 1720, educated as ministers at the University of Edinburgh, settled in Edinburgh in the 1740's and 1750's, and were affiliated with the Moderate Party in church affairs (Sher: 14, 25) The Moderates were a conservative group whose theology shifted the emphasis of Calvinism "from predestination and election to individual and social morality" (Sher: 35). The Moderates' reaction to economic growth in eighteenth century Scotland was to identify and try to mitigate its potential negative effects (Sher: 187). Given Ferguson's membership in this social group, Sher interprets the Essay as a conservative, Calvinist exhortation for national moral regeneration in order to maintain the status quo (Sher: 43-44, 198-199).

Gossman and Sher provide similar analyses of Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings, based on the social-psychological effects of membership in identity forming groups. Rousseau was a historical pessimist because he belonged to an oppressed social class, while Ferguson was extremely conservative because he belonged to a circle of Moderate Calvinists. Although the attempt to specifically define Rousseau's and Ferguson's social positions is an advance over strictly macro-historical explanations of their thought, two problems undermine such an attempt. First, Rousseau and Ferguson did not really conform to fully pessimistic or conservative interpretations attributed to their social background. Second, Rousseau and Ferguson were uniquely differentiated members of their social groups. Rousseau was socially marginalized throughout his early life, first as a poor vagabond, then as a debutant intellectual (Baczko: 27-29). However, prior to writing the Discourse, Rousseau attained fame in mainstream French culture. Ferguson was the only member of the Moderate literati with a Highlands background, and he was the only member not to have settled in an Edinburgh area parish in his twenties (Sher: 33; Forbes: 41, 47). The distinctiveness of Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings and social experiences suggests that their work must be understood in the context of their personal experiences and orientations, not merely in the context of macro-historical factors or membership in broad social groups. Although such macro factors are significant in shaping experiences and orientations, Rousseau's and Ferguson's uniqueness defies sociological explanations which remain exclusively at such levels of generalization.

Clearly, a micro-level approach is needed to deal with the idiosyncratic nature of Rousseau's and Ferguson's thought. Psychological factors are commonly used to explain Rousseau's writings. Rousseau's anti-progressive early writings are often explained by the 'sudden flash of illumination' which he had on his way to visit Didero in prison in 1749 (Martin: 197). In his Confessions, Rousseau describes his reaction to reading the Dijon Academy's question about the moral impact of the arts and sciences:

> A l'instant de cette lecture, je vis un autre univers et je devins un autre homme.... Mes

> sentiments se montèrent, avec la plus inconcevable rapidité, au ton de mes idées. Toutes mes petites passions furent étouffées par l'enthousiasme de la vérité, de la liberté, de la vertu; et ce qu'il y a de plus étonnant est que cette effervescence se soutint dans mon coeur, durant plus de quatre ou cinq ans, à un aussi haut degré peut-etre qu'elle ait jamais été dans le coeur d'aucun autre homme (Rousseau, 1891: 309).

In this visionary breakthrough, Rousseau realized how civilization corrupts man's natural goodness. (Martin: 197).

Jean Starobinski's psychological explanation of the Discourse suggests that the Dijon Academy's 1753 question about the origin and foundation of inequality stimulated Rousseau to construct a rigorous, scientific defense of his Vincennes illumination (Starobinski: xlii-xliii). The Discourse shows the historical foundations of his philosophical attack on civilization (Starobinski: xliii). Starobinski suggests that Rousseau intensely experienced inequality because Rousseau's father gave him a very proud character, but Rousseau's life was a series of humiliating subaltern jobs and material dependencies (Starobinski: xliv). This combination of upbringing and experience made Rousseau sense that he deserved better (Starobinski: xlv). Rousseau saw poverty all around him, realized that he was not the only victim of inequality, and became proud of his poor but free condition (Starobinski: xlv). Rousseau became so strongly committed to the principles of independence and poverty that he refused all opportunities to improve his material condition (Starobinski: xlvi-xlvii). Strong psychological commitment illuminates Rousseau's normative orientations, but does not explain why Rousseau would form such conceptions of his experiences, nor account for the Discourse's theoretical richness.

B. EXPLAINING ROUSSEAU AND FERGUSON

My explanation of the Discourse and Essay suggests that Rousseau and Ferguson were creative and thoughtful men, whose social experiences and practical orientations limited the parameters of their theories. I suggest that a sociological explanation of these books is possible despite their exceptional character, but that individual authors must be the primary level of analysis. Inadequate data are available to construct a complete picture of Rousseau's and

Ferguson's social experiences, but one should use what information is available, rather than explain Rousseau's and Ferguson's ideas with reference to macro-level factors only (Camic: 10). There are three basic parts to my analysis. First, since both men were widely read professional intellectuals, existing literature on societal development shaped the manner in which they approached that subject. Parts I and II of this essay clearly establish the continuities between Rousseau, Ferguson, and earlier literature on social change. Second, Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences structured their normative evaluations of advanced society. Third, these men's practical orientions while writing the Discourse and Essay constrained their theoretical argumentation. In the next section, I will use historical and biographical materials to reconstruct these experiences and orientations.

As Part II of this essay suggests, the Discourse and Essay are complex works. It would be banal to attempt to explain the subtle nuances and specific arguments of these works with reference to broad social factors. However, the books have distinctive general points of interest that are amenable to sociological explanation. The most interesting aspect of these books is their anomalous relationship with contemporary theoretical and normative evaluations of societal development. Rousseau's negative depiction of existing advanced societies contrasts strongly with the progressive vision of civilization held by men such as Diderot, Voltaire, Buffon, and Turgot. Rousseau's contractarian explanation of advanced societies takes social theory back to the era before Montesquieu. Similarly, Ferguson is the exceptional member of the Scottish Enlightenment. Normatively, he was less appreciative of the values of modern society, although his later writings better fit the conventional Enlightenment mode (Camic: 53-56, 70-71). Theoretically, he was the only major Scottish philosopher not to use a four-stages theory of history (Chitnis: 102-106). [15]

[15]The four stages theory, as described in Part I in the discussion of Adam Smith, saw history as progressing teleologically through phases of hunting, herding, farming, and commerce. Smith, Hume, Kames, Robertson, and Millar all described history in these terms. To recall from Part II, Ferguson's three stages of history (savagery, barbarism, and civil society) were defined more by the institution of private property than by the mode of subsistence.

The anomalous features of the Discourse and Essay which I will explain are their normative ambivalence and theoretical vacillation beween natural history and earlier forms of social theory. To summarize these features, one can say that Rousseau sees the emergence of civilization as a negative phenomena which may eventually be beneficial, while Ferguson depicts civil society as basically good, but capable of degenerating. Theoretically, Rousseau and Ferguson both explain early societal development as a natural, historical evolution, but this explanation breaks down in advanced societies, where ahistorical contracts and moral commitments shape social order and change. To explain these features of Rousseau's and Ferguson's ideas, I will outline their biographies. I will show how their normative ambivalence about the merits of civilization reflects their marginalized positions and irregular successes within advanced societies. I will also show how the immediate practical contexts of the Discourse and Essay reflect these social experiences, and constrain Rousseau's and Ferguson's theoretical options.

C. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Rousseau was born on June 28, 1712 in the upper class district of Geneva (Cranston: 13). His mother Suzanne Bernard, whose family came from Geneva's intellectual elite, died of puerperal fever about a week after Rousseau was born (Cranston: 13). His father Isaac Rousseau was a watchmaker whose family had fled France as Protestant refugees four generations previously (Cranston: 13, 17). After his mother's death, Rousseau and his family continued to live in their elegant house, but when Jean-Jacques was five, his father had lost most of the fortune he had acquired by marrying Suzanne, and the family moved to Isaac's old, poor neighborhood of St. Gervais (Cranston: 13). Rousseau stayed in St. Gervais for about five years. His father kept him home from school, and rarely allowed him to play with other childern (Cranston: 24-25). Rousseau's father beat him and his brother Francois frequently, and often blamed Jean-Jacques for Suzanne's death (Cranston: 25). When Jean-Jacques was ten years old, Isaac fled Geneva to avoid trial for public quarreling, and

abandoned Jean-Jacques to the care of his wealthy uncle, Gabrien Bernard (Cranston: 28-29).

Ferguson's early life was more stable than Rousseau's. He was born on June 20, 1723 as the last of eight children of Adam Ferguson (sr.) and Mary Gordon (Kettler: 42-43; Camic: 134). His father was a Calvinist minister in Logierait, in the foothills of the Scottish Highlands (Kettler: 42). Ferguson's family was poor, but repectable and connected to the House of Athole and the Duke of Argyll (Kettler: 43). The Ferguson household was characterized by rigid and patriarchal Calvinism, and young Adam attended the local parish school for five years (Kettler: 43; Camic:160). When he was ten, Ferguson was sent to live with relatives and study at a highly respected grammar school in Perth (Kettler: 43; Camic: 139).

At the age of ten, Rousseau and Ferguson were permanently separated from their immediate families, except for brief visits. However, the experiences which followed this separation were very different. Rousseau had an unstable youth. Shortly after the departure of his father, Rousseau was sent with his cousin Abraham to study with Calvinist pastor Lambercier at Bossey (Cranston: 29-30). The boys spent two years there, and then returned to the Bernard household in Geneva. Rousseau was sent to work as a notary's pupil-clerk, but he was quickly dismissed (Cranston: 36). In April 1725, Rousseau was committed to a five year apprenticeship to an engraver, and he was again sent down into the poorer neighborhoods of Geneva (Cranston: 36). He disliked engraving, was frequently beaten by his master, and ran away from Geneva in the spring of 1728 (Cranston: 40-41).

At the age of fifteen, Rousseau was a wanderer in the Duchy of Savoy. Eventually, he accepted a priest's offer to study Catholicism in return for room and board (Cranston: 44-45). To do this, he spent a brief period with Madam de Warens at Annency, and then walked to Turin, renounced Protestantism, and was baptized and converted to Catholicism (Cranston: 49-53). After his conversion, Rousseau spent the rest of 1728 and the spring of 1729 between periods of unemployment and working as a footman for aristocratic families in

Turin (Cranston: 56-57). After being fired from one such job, Rousseau returned to Annency (Cranston: 67-68). There, he stayed with Madam de Warens, and failed in training for the priesthood and for choir school (Cranston: 81-83). Rousseau subsequently left Annency, and spent a couple of years as a "penniless, homeless, unemployed youth" (Cranston: 92-99). He begged from his father, failed as a musician, and even became involved in a scam to collect money from people on religious pretexts (Cranston: 92-99). However, Rousseau's condition improved in autumn 1731, when Madam de Warens took him in and found him a job as a clerk (Cranston: 101-103). Rousseau quit this position after about eight months, but he became de Warens' lover and stayed with her, teaching music lessons until 1737.

In contrast, Ferguson passed his youth attainning formal education. He spent five years in grammar school in Perth, where he was an outstanding student (Small: 600; Camic: 158-161). In 1738, Ferguson won a bursary to attend college at St. Andrews, and four years later he received an M.A. degree (Kettler: 44). Ferguson continued his education in theology at the University of Edinburgh (Camic: 191; Kettler: 44). In 1745, after less than three years of a six year program, Freguson became deputy chaplain of the "Black Watch," or the 42nd Regiment of the British Army (Kettler: 44-45). Ferguson was ordained as a Presbyterian minister that same year. He attained these positions without fulfilling the normal training requirements due to his connections with the Athole family (Small: 601; Kettler: 44-45).

At the age of 23, Ferguson was on his way to a prosperous clerical career, while Rousseau at the same age possessed no profession or trade, and had few practical alternatives (Camic: 191; Cranston: 115). However, as young adults, Rousseau and Ferguson both experienced periods of success mixed with substantial frustration. In 1737, Rousseau attained the Genevan age of majority of twenty five years, and he returned to Geneva to receive his share of his mother's estate (Cranston: 124). Unfortunately, he received only about one fifth of his expectations, and the money ran out by November 1737. Although Madam de Warens had found another lover, she kept Rousseau at her summer home until 1740, when Rousseau

went to Lyons to work as a tutor for an aristocratic family (Cranston: 138-140). His contract was not renewed after a year, and Rousseau decided to go to Paris, where he published a book on music and befriended Diderot (Cranston: 150-154, 161-163). In 1743, Rousseau went to Venice to work at the French Embassy. However, his relationship with the French ambassador quickly soured, and Rousseau left his position within a year. He returned to Paris and lived in the household of Ignacio Altuna, a Spanish nobleman (Cranston: 192, 195-197).

When Altuna returned to Spain in the spring of 1745, Rousseau's debts mounted, and he moved back into the poor hotel Saint Quentin (Cranston: 197-198). He did odd jobs for a while, but from 1746 to 1751 he worked almost continuously as the secretary to the Dupin household (Cranston: 202-203). Rousseau earned little money, but was able to read a variety of classical and contemporary literature (Cranston: 204-206). During this period, he became lovers with a chamber maid named Thérèse Lavasseur (Cranston: 198). Eventually, Rousseau fathered five of Thérèse's children, and delivered them all to the orphanage. Rousseau was frequently ill and short of money, and the inheritance that he received when his father died in 1747 did little to help his condition (Cranston: 210-212).

Initially, Ferguson's professional experiences contrasted sharply with Rousseau's. He spent nine years as a chaplain in the British army, and apparently served so well in campaigns in Flanders, Brittany, and Ireland, that he was nicknamed the "Warlike Chaplain" (Kettler: 45-48; Sher: 33). His Highlands regiment was kept out of the campaign against the '45 Rebellion, although it appears that Ferguson was thoroughly anti-Jacobite and anti-Stuart himself (Kettler: 45-46). In December of 1745, Ferguson gave a sermon to his Highlands regiment which opposed the rebellion, and reminded the troops of their duty to serve their country, in spite of the fact that Highlanders constituted the bulk of the rebels (Sher: 40-41).

Despite his early success, Ferguson suffered setbacks later in his career, and became an unemployed professional at the age of thirty one (Camic: 218). Ferguson resigned his army position when his regiment was sent to America in 1754, and he gave up his clerical career in the same year, when his father died and he was not asked to replace him at Logierait

(Small: 603; Kettler: 48). [16] From 1754 to 1759, Ferguson experienced financial problems, and unsatisfying working arrangements (Kettler: 49). Ferguson's frustration with this period of his life is reflected in the following passage from his letter to Gilbert Elliot: "A subsistence altogether precarious, however honorable for the present or big with hopes, was never to my mind. Every man of worth should have a firm bottom on which he may stand..." (Ferguson, in Sher: 93). He was unemployed until 1757, when he acquired a low paying position as a clerk and librarian (Kettler: 49). He left this position quickly, to become tutor to the sons of Lord Bute (Small: 604; Kettler: 49). As a tutor, Ferguson had "little status, security, or leisure," and in 1759 Ferguson accepted a professorial chair in natural philosophy at Edinburgh, even though he knew little about the subject (Kettler: 49-51).

Rousseau's and Ferguson's early adulthoods combined success and failure. Interestingly, the periods just prior to the publication of the Discourse and Essay were the most successful yet experienced by these men. Rousseau worked for the Dupins, frequented the salons of wealthy ladies, wrote several articles on musical subjects for Diderot's Encyclopédie, and became famous for his Discourse on the Arts and Sciences, which won the Dijon Academy's prize in 1750 (Cranston: 216,221-222). The question which Rousseau addressed in the essay was "Whether the Restoration of the arts and sciences has had the effect of purifying or corrupting morals?" (Rousseau, 1968: 119). Rousseau's response to this question was a straightforward assertion that "our minds have been corrupted in proportion as the arts and sciences have improved" (Rousseau, 1968: 123). To support this position, Rousseau compared the goodness of primitive men with the degeneracy of civilized men (Rousseau, 1968: 123-125, 134-135). He asserted that "luxury, profligacy, and slavery have been, in all ages, the scourge of the efforts of our pride to emerge from that happy state of ignorance, in which the wisdom of providence had placed us" (Rousseau, 1968: 129). The only concession which Rousseau made to the potential benefits of science was to suggest that

[16]There is some doubt about the year in which Ferguson actually resigned his chaplaincy. Most sources cite 1754, but Sher has found a letter of Ferguson's which suggests that Ferguson did not officially resign until 1757 (Sher: 93-95).

a limited number of enlightened minds could use knowledge for the good of mankind (Rousseau, 1968: 142).

The Discourse on Inequality was written in the context of a series of refutations and defences of the Discourse on the Arts and Sciences. In 1751 and 1752, Rousseau published four responses to various refutations of his condemnation of the arts and sciences, and the preface to his play Narcisse also dealt with the subject (Rousseau, 1964: 31-102; Rousseau, 1978: 537-553). Four central objections to Rousseau's early essay were that science could not possibly be the root of corruption; that Rousseau's theory rested on unproven assumptions about the Golden Age and primitive man's virtuousness; that Rousseau's pessimism led to the ridiculous conclusion that society should burn its libraries and destroy all academic institutions; and that Rousseau's personal conduct contradicted his principles, since he attacked the arts, yet wrote plays, operas, and articles for the progressive Encyclopédie. Rousseau's responses to these criticisms influenced his theoretical leanings and practical position prior to writing the Discourse.

Theoretically, Rousseau's defense of his early essay widened the scope of his attack on civilization. He asserted that science and corruption were correlated, but that the ultimate causes of both were inequality, idleness, and the desire for distinction (Rousseau, 1964: 49-50; Rousseau, 1978: 546-547). The following passage from the preface to Narcisse represents the broadening of Rousseau's critique of society:

> What a strange and fatal condition-where accumulated riches facilitate still greater riches, but where men with none can acquire none; where the good man knows no way out of his misery; where the most roguish are the most honored and where virtue must be renounced for men to remain honest. I know this has all been said a hundred times by those who rant and rave. But where they declaim, I reason; where they apprehend evil, I reveal its causes. And so, in the end, my vision is both consoling and useful, for it demonstrates that all these vices belong less to man, than to man badly governed (Rousseau, 1978: 550).

Man is naturally good, but may be corrupted by society.

Rousseau's second theoretical response to his critics was to use historical examples to prove both the correlation of science and corruption, and the virtuous character of primitive

peoples (Rousseau, 1964: 44-49, 90-91). He asserted that to confirm his thesis, "il ne faut qu'ouvrir les annales du monde" (Rousseau, 1964: 74). His third theoretical response was to clarify his recommendations about what should be done about European corruption. Rousseau suggested that corrupted people can never return to virtue, so that destroying the arts and sciences would plunge Europe into barbarousness without improving morality (Rousseau, 1964: 55-56). Instead, the arts and sciences should be applied to soften the corruption they helped cause (Rousseau, 1964: 56; Rousseau, 1978: 551). All three of these theoretical innovations are evident in the Discourse.

Public debate over Rousseau's Discourse on the Arts and Sciences also influenced Rousseau's social position and experiences prior to writing the Discourse. Rousseau responded to accusations that he was a hy ocrite by suggesting that his work in literature and music was "youthful amusement" (Rousseau, 1964: 101). He declared that he was reformed, and challenged his critics to

> study my principles and observe my conduct. If they but once notice that I begin to curry favor with the public, or that I grow vain at having composed a few pretty songs, or tht I seek to injure the reputation of my rivals, or that I affect to speak badly of the great men of my century so that, in lowering them to my level, I can raise myself to theirs, or that I aspire to academic chairs or titles, or that I set about courting ladies of fashion, or that I flatter great men for their foolishness, or that, no longer wishing to live by the labour of my hands and willing to regard my chosen trade as ignominous, I take steps to become wealthy-- if, in a word, they ever observe that the love of reputation has caused be to forget the love of virtue, then I beg them to warn me-indeed, publically warn me-and I swear that I shall instantly throw all my books and writings into the fire and concede every error they reproach me with (Rousseau, 1978: 552-553).

Such declarations undoubtably contributed to Rousseau's rejection of a lucrative job offer from a tax farmer, and a royal pension (Cranston: 250-252, 265-266). Two further events which reinforced Rousseau's commitment to poverty and independence were the theft of his good shirts, and his doctor's diagnosis that he was terminally ill (Rousseau, 1891: 318-321). In 1752, Rousseau was famous, but had little money, poor health, and still worked as a music copyist (Cranston: 250, 256, 266).

Ferguson was very successful in the period immediately preceding the publication of his Essay. Although he knew little about natural science, he taught it well. In 1764, Ferguson became professor of pneumatics and moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh (Kettler: 55). This move was very lucrative. Ferguson's classes were popular, and through salary and class fees, he earned between two hundred and three hundred pounds sterling a year after 1764 (Sher: 123). [17] He also tutored the sons of the Earl of Warwick, and was a member of such Edinburgh clubs as the Speculative Society and the Select Club (Kettler: 55-56). Although Ferguson had resigned his chaplaincy, he played a major role in church politics as a lay elder in the Moderate Party (Sher: 125). Ferguson was a member of the Presbyterian general assembly almost every year from 1762 to 1785 (Sher: 125, 128). Ferguson was active in many political arenas, but his favorite issue was the question of founding a Scottish militia. Since the militia issue was central to Ferguson's political commitments during his writing of the Essay, I will outline the issue and Ferguson's position.

In 1757 the British Parliament passed a Militia Act which excluded Scotland due to mistrust over the 1745 Rebellion [18](Lenman: 30). However, the Seven Years' War sparked fears of invasion, and Scotland's leading intellectuals lobbied to extend the militia program to Scotland (Robertson: 7-8). Adam Ferguson led the Edinburgh Moderates on this issue, and in 1756 published a pamphlet entitled "Reflections Prior to the Establishment of a Militia" (Robertson: 8, 87; Kettler: 88-89). Ferguson's argument went beyond the strategic importance and cost effectiveness of a militia, and suggested that a militia would improve public morality and solidarity, as well as underline Scotland's integration into Britain (Kettler: 88-89; Lenman: 30). Ferguson asserted that only landowners should be able to arm

[17]Compare this figure with the forty pounds sterling per year salary of Ferguson in 1757 as Keeper of the Advocates Library (Sher: 122).

[18]The '45 was a rising of Highlands clans and some Lowland Jacobists. The rebels captured Edinburgh, and invaded England in an attempt to dissolve the Union of 1707 and restore the Stuart dynasty to the throne of Britain (Mitchison: 165-166). The rebels were driven back into Scotland, and eventually vanquished at Culloden in 1746 (Mitchison:166). This outcome confirmed the permanence of Union and the rule of the House of Hanover, and prompted repressive measures to destroy the Highlanders' clanship system (Lenman: 1; Mitchison: 166-167).

themselves, and that military virtues should be taught to the upper classes in order to defend the nation, and reduce the corruption of commercial society (Robertson: 89-91). Ferguson was a founding member of the Poker Club, which he named to indicate the club's goal to "poke-up" national sentiment to a blaze on the militia issue (Lenman: 30-31). Unfortunately for Ferguson and his associates, they never succeeded in creating a Scottish national militia (Robertson: 159; Kettler: 89).

In spite of obvious differences, Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences are quite parallel. They were both raised in areas with long Calvinist histories, but where rapid social change and rising prosperity were eroding traditional values and theology (Leigh: 1-2). Geneva and Scotland were also both well educated areas, whose national identities were threatened by cultural pressures from powerful external states (Leigh: 2). In addition to these similar national contexts, Rousseau and Ferguson had parallel early life experiences. They were both separated from their immediate families at age ten, and passed several years dependent upon relatives and school or work masters. They both experienced significant frustrations in earning a living, and achieved success in intellectual settings just prior to writing the Discourse and Essay. The immediate contexts in which these books were written were also parallel. The books were both early works in their authors' literary careers, and they appeared in the midst of significant political involvements. Rousseau and Ferguson were both in their early forties at the time of writing, and they were both relative outsiders living in centres of enlightenment. Rousseau was a Genevan in Paris, and Ferguson was a Highlander in Edinburgh. These parallel social experiences suggest common grounds for explaining the exceptional nature of Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings on societal development.

D. CONCLUSION

Rousseau's and Ferguson's normative evaluations of advanced societies clearly have a firm basis in their social experiences and practical orientations. The Discourse and Essay are ambivalent about the moral worth of civilization, but both assert that societal development

can benefit the human condition. This ambivalent hopefulness parallels the frustrations and successes in Rousseau's and Ferguson's social lives. Before the publication of the Discourse and Essay, both men had experienced significant periods of frustration and marginalism followed by relative success and fame. The difficulties which both men underwent in their everyday lives produced a vision of the modern world as somewhat less than ideal. This vision became very salient at the time of writing the Discourse and Essay due to commitments which Rousseau and Ferguson had recently made in their public lives. Both Rousseau and Ferguson had supported causes which opposed the values of modern societies. Rousseau had attained fame as a champion of freedom, simplicity, and poverty, while Ferguson had supported a Scottish militia on the basis of traditional values. Thus, Rousseau's and Ferguson's social experiences and practical commitments structured their normative evaluations of societal development.

The link between Rousseau's and Ferguson's theories of societal development, and their social experiences is more complex. At the simplest level, the fact that Rousseau and Ferguson both lived in changing societies stimulated their thought about social order and development. To explain contractarian and evolutionary explanations of social change, one can assert that people whose lives are dominated by relationships based upon tradition or personal service obligations would conceptualize change as emanating from the wills of men, while people whose social relations are dominated by impersonal market forces would conceptualize societal development as something which operates according to laws which man cannot control. However, Rousseau's and Ferguson's theories of societal development combine evolutionary and contractarian elements. They explain early societal development in terms of unintended consequences or accidents, but the reproduction or change of advanced societies occurs due to legal contracts and moral commitments.

Given the complexity of Rousseau's and Ferguson's theories of development, there are two ways to forward the hypothesis that social experiences structure people's consciousness. First, one could maintain the notion that experience leads directly to theory,

and suggest that Rousseau's and Ferguson's lives were a mixture of traditional obligations and market relationships. This is undoubtably true, but vague. Alternatively, one could suggest that social experiences influenced Rousseau's and Ferguson's theoretical thinking by structuring their normative orientations and practical commitments. This option can be advanced with greater clarity. Rousseau and Ferguson were both widely read men, who could creatively select and adapt existing theories of societal development. They chose and adapted these existing ideas in the context of the practical commitments they had made. Rousseau and Ferguson could accept theories of natural history for the explanation of historical social change, but they could not explain contemporary societies in such terms, for to do so would have meant acknowledging that even vicious aspects of society evolved naturally, and could not be changed by human agency. In the periods in which they wrote the Discourse and Essay, Rousseau and Ferguson were agitating for such changes. Presenting consistently developmentalist theories of history and society would have undermined these political commitments.

V. CONCLUSION

The guiding hypothesis of this essay is that ideas about societal development reflect their authors' social experiences and practical orientations, rather than merely the internal dynamics of the history of ideas, or macro-historical changes in social organization. To advance this hypothesis, Part I outlines the history of pre-1760 notions of social order and change, Part II reveals that Rousseau's and Ferguson's writings cannot be properly understood or explained by merely intellectual history, and Part III suggests a manner in which these writings can be adequately analyzed. This case study of the Discourse and Essay supports the validity of the three Mannheimian postulates discussed in my introduction.

First, "every formulation of a problem is made possible only by a previous actual human experience which involves such a problem" (Mannheim: 268). Rousseau's and Ferguson's focus on societal development is based on their own experiences of social change, and on their readings of historically and culturally distant societies. Their theoretical approach to this subject reflects the accumulated intellectual heritage in which they were immersed as professional intellectuals. This postulate helps explain why neither Rousseau nor Ferguson developed a naturalistic theory of the transcendence of civil society. Rousseau wanted to change civil society through adopting a better social contract, while Ferguson wanted to preserve some of the moral virtues of earlier societies. Neither man could conceive of extending the theory that simple societies evolved naturally, to explaining the further development of civil society. This inability resulted from the absence of any experiential basis for such an explanation. In the mid 1700's, industrial, American, and French revolutions had not yet occured, and existing developmentalist theories saw civil society as the final stage of development. Only constitutional change, or a return to virtuous actions were conceivable bases for further social change.

Mannheim's second postulate is that "in selection from the multiplicity of data there is involved an act of will on the part of the knower" (Mannheim: 268). Rousseau and Ferguson creatively manipulated and synthesized existing empirical data and theoretical

notions about societal development. The literature surveyed in Part I reveals the variety of images of the savage and theories of social change available to Rousseau and Ferguson. Empirically, Rousseau concentrated on those travel narratives, such as DuTertre's, which depicted savages as lacking all civilized traits. Ferguson concentrated on writers such as Lafitau and Charlevoix, who suggested that savage society was complex. Theoretically, Rousseau and Ferguson both combined naturalistic explanations of the evolution of simple societies with contractarian explanations of advanced societies. Clearly, Rousseau and Ferguson creatively synthesized data and theory to produce unique explanations of societal development.

Mannheim's third postulate is that "forces arising out of living experience are significant in the direction which the treatment of the problem follows" (Mannheim, 268). I have clearly demonstrated the correlation between Rousseau's and Ferguson's biographical experiences and their normative evaluations of societal development. I have also illustrated that both experience and normative orientations influenced Rousseau's and Ferguson's theoretical assertions. Rousseau's and Ferguson's marginal positions and mixed experiences in advanced societies created ambivalent normative evaluations of civil society. This point is supported by Rousseau's relatively greater negativity, and by increasingly positive evaluations in Ferguson's later writings, which followed his many successful years as a university professor. Rousseau's and Ferguson's disapproval of certain aspects of civil society led them to agitate for social changes. This agitation prohibited them from describing civil society in naturalistic terms. Rousseau and Ferguson creatively synthesized existing ideas about societal development. These creative acts were stimulated by each man's immediate practical orientations: Rousseau's polemic in response to his Discourse on the Arts and Sciences; and Ferguson's academic position and commitment to a Scottish militia. Thus, Rousseau's and Ferguson's combinations of deterministic natural history and volunteeristic contractarian thought about civil society, reflected the practical necessity of human agency in their commitments to social change.

The most obvious objection to the development of my thesis is that I have provided no comparative basis against which to analyze Rousseau and Ferguson. Perhaps many eighteenth century writers had similar social experiences, but wrote in completely different manners. A full discussion of this issue is beyond the scope of this paper, but I will use Turgot and Adam Smith to provide illustrative counterpoints which support my thesis. To recall from Part I, Turgot and Smith both suggested that civil society evolved naturally, and thought that advanced societies were normatively superior to savage ones. Given my thesis, one would expect Turgot and Smith to have had positive experiences and privileged positions within advanced societies. A brief glance at their biographies supports this expectation. Turgot was born into a wealthy aristocratic family in Normandy. He received a Bachelor of Theology in 1749, and left his clerical post two years later, to join the upper ranks of the civil service (Turgot: 2). Adam Smith was born in the Scottish Lowlands, and his father was a judge who had once been England's Minister for Scotland (Hirst: 1-2). He studied at the universities of Glasgow and Oxford, and held the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow from 1751 to 1764 (Smith, 1976: 1; Hirst: 4-9). This comparative evidence is superficial, but it indicates the potential richness of further comparative historical work in this area.

Apart from the interpretation and explanation of the Discourse and Essay, this essay has broader implications for the sociological study of social theory. Social theory, such as notions of societal development, must be understood in relation to authorial experiences and intentions. Theory does not evolve according to the internal relations of ideas. The Discourse and Essay offer unique alternatives to mainstream theories and evaluations of social change. Their exceptional nature highlights the manner in which social experiences and practical orientations, rather than some internal logic of data accumulation and theoretical sophistication, mold social theory. Purely intellectual history is clearly inadequate for the sociological study of social theory.

Similarly, conventional approaches to the sociology of knowledge provide inadequate explanations of social theory. The notion that theory reflects class interests provides a general

guide to mainstream theories, but cannot explain the complexities of specific ideas, nor account for anomalous writers who escape such crude social determination. A biographical and social psychological approach to specific writers and texts is required. With this approach rather than a purely macro-level consideration of systems of ideas, one can begin to sort out the complex relationships between thought, social life, and authorial experiences and intentions.

Finally, this essay raises interesting questions about the nature of societal development theories. It is a long way from Rousseau and Ferguson to contemporary theorists of Third World development. Contemporary writers have fundamentally different basic conceptions and assumptions, and they focus on different societies. However, affinities exist between Enlightenment and contemporary theorists of development. Both groups seem to focus on other cultures and historical epochs. Rousseau, Ferguson, and other eighteenth century natural historians used savages and ancients to reconstruct the history of civil society. Today's writers combine Third World social and economic conditions with historical patterns of development in the developed world, and the establishment of imperialist and dependent international relationships, to speculate about potential changes in the Third World. However, there is a sense in which these analytical foci conceal a fundamental normative concern with the theorists' own societies. In the Enlightenment, natural history legitimated the emergence of capitalist social relations as natural and benevolent. Rousseau and Ferguson opposed this legitimation, and created theories which emphasized human responsibility for civil society, while recognizing the cumulative logic of history. Today's development theorists imply that the developed world is the goal to which the Third World should strive. If development is a cherished objective, then the forms of social organization in the developed world must either be good, or necessary for passage into a better society. The results of my case studies of Rousseau and Ferguson suggest that authorial social experiences and practical orientations must be known to appreciate the relationship between analytical and normative propositions, and to illuminate the wider implications of development theory.

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